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# THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY  
JOHN ELY BRIGGS

VOLUME IV  
JANUARY TO DECEMBER  
1923

PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY  
THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA  
IOWA CITY IOWA  
1923

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THE EDITOR

**PUBLISHED MONTHLY AT IOWA CITY BY  
THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA**

## THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE

The PALIMPSEST, issued monthly by the State Historical Society of Iowa, is devoted to the dissemination of Iowa History. Supplementing the other publications of this Society, it aims to present the materials of Iowa History in a form that is attractive and a style that is popular in the best sense—to the end that the story of our Commonwealth may be more widely read and cherished.

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH

*Superintendent*

## THE MEANING OF PALIMPSESTS

In early times palimpsests were parchments or other materials from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete; and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the records of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

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# THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY JOHN ELY BRIGGS

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No. 1

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## The Siege of Corinth

The reader of history is usually informed that on such a day General So-and-so moved on such a road, or in such a direction, and occupied such a point with so many men, with the view of accomplishing some certain stated purpose. This clear, precise, and definite view of the matter is not taken by the rank and file who march in the general's army. A commanding general has no time to arrange and exhibit plans with explanatory comments, for the enlightenment of his army. It would be very injudicious for him to do so if he could. Officers and soldiers are nearly always in utmost ignorance of what is about to be attempted (unless a charge is impending, on which occasion they are, or should be, informed), but it is their business to fall in at the tap of the drum, and march where glory or disaster awaits them. No matter how wise the captains or lieutenants look, they know no more about what is in contemplation

than the men do. Even the colonel — whose orders are more imperial and more certain to be carried out than the political schemes of a king or president — even that autocrat, five times out of ten, is ignorant of where he is going or what he is going for. Our colonel, the redoubtable Alexander Chambers, never seemed to care, but mounted his horse, gave his commands, and led the way like a human machine — as a colonel should do.

The real advance of Halleck's army upon Corinth began on April 29, 1862. My private journal describes our first move.

“On Tuesday noon I arrived in camp from a toilsome detail. I had barely time to swallow a dinner before the drums beat to fall in line. Orders had come to move without tents or knapsacks, and with a day's rations in our haversacks. Of our own volition we also left our blankets and overcoats behind us, in order to be free of incumbrance and ready for the fray. The brigade moved in a body, and our course was apparently in the direction of the enemy's stronghold.

“The afternoon was hot. Our line of march was sometimes rough, and at other times lay through pleasant places. For a while we would pass through cool and shady woods, filled with the odors of flowers, shrubbery, and sweet blossoms, and then emerge into a clearing that formed the homestead of some hardy farmer, whose log cabin, dogs, and half-terrified children seemed a mute protest against the bar-



barity of war. Pushing down a few yards of his rail fence, we would march on through green meadows and fragrant orchards. Many little homes, half concealed by foliage, excited our envy. If we grew enthusiastic over the natural beauties around us, some swamp was sure to obstruct our way. 'Forward!' would be the word, and forward our column would move through water and mud knee deep, amid the shouting of the officers and the swearing of the men. At the end of every hour we would halt five or ten minutes to rest.

"At about dusk several regiments of Union cavalry passed us, galloping to the rear. In reply to inquiries as to where they had been, one trooper yelled: 'To the Land of Nod, where's there's forty devils and no God.' With more courtesy, an officer reined in and said they had been raiding on the enemy's flank, and had burnt two railroad bridges and also captured a locomotive.

"After dark the march was more difficult than ever. We floundered through swamps and through brush and every sort of jungle, and the Recording Angel must have had a severe night's work of it, to judge by the multiplicity of oaths we showered around. At ten o'clock the welcome order to halt was given. After forming a line of battle, and receiving strict instructions to build no fires, we stacked arms and slept on the ground without covering or bedding of any description.

"At daylight we rose, and with some disregard of

orders, built a long line of blazing bonfires. After drying ourselves, and feeding on crackers and bacon, we fell into line and moved still further towards Corinth. We had proceeded only about a mile when we came to a halt and faced about, intelligence having been officially sent that some point we had been ordered to drive the enemy from had been already occupied by Union troops. The news was not gratefully heard, and with loud grumbling we started back, reaching camp in the afternoon, much worn by the expedition.

“May 1st we broke camp, taking tents and equipage with us, and after traversing a delightful region, came to our present location — a few miles south of the State line of Tennessee, and on the sacred soil of Mississippi. I am sitting in a cool grove, the boughs of which are filled with feathered songsters. In front of me flows a limpid brook, and on a little eminence beyond are twelve pieces of artillery, frowning in the direction of Corinth.”

The next morning we pushed on again over excellent roads till we came to the hamlet of Monterey, from which the enemy had been shelled. Fragments of old tents, knapsacks, clothing of all kinds, commissary stores, and a little of everything imaginable, were flung around promiscuously. Along the route we had come, we found the grain fields trampled, fences torn down, farms deserted, houses riddled with cannon shot or shell, and dead horses lying about everywhere, for there had been much cavalry fighting. For the first time we saw a field of cotton,

and more than ever realized we were in Dixie. A citizen yet lingering around the wreck of Monterey, told me that after the battle of Shiloh, the Confederates who came flying by his home were in utter panic; that discipline and organization were gone, and that "it was every devil for himself to get to Corinth."

On the afternoon of May 3d we heard heavy cannonading ahead. I sat on a fence and counted fifty-five guns, fired about as fast as I could count them. We afterwards learned that the enemy had been driven out of Farmington. The next day we moved forward two miles, and occupied a heavy line of works, with troops in line of battle on either side of us. There a slight military misfortune befell me. A corporal struck me a blow in the face. For retorting with the butt of a musket, I was arrested on the charge — as the boys phrased it — of "smiting an inferior officer." After passing a night in the guard-tent, I was ordered to my company for duty.

Thus far we had not encountered the enemy, although expecting to at any hour, as skirmishing and fighting were going on continually. On the 16th we pressed his lines for the first time, while making another advance, and skirmishers deployed in force at the front of our brigade. A lively fight ensued immediately, without formalities, and leaden "epistles to the Corinthians" flew thick and fast. In about an hour, with the assistance of a little grape and canister, the woods were cleared of Confederates, and, advancing to a position that seemed satisfactory, we halted and threw up a line of works.



That night our regiment performed "grand guard" duty for the first time. We marched into the woods a little to the rear of the skirmish line, and remained there all night, in one body, in readiness to repulse any heavy attack the enemy might make. A few men from each company did sentry duty, in order to give alarm in case of danger, and the others, with accoutrements on, were allowed to lie on the ground and sleep. I happened to be one of those on guard. Extremely tired, and not being well accustomed to marching as yet, in the warm, close atmosphere of a dense wood, we found it difficult to keep awake. Resorting to various expedients, I fell at last to wooing the muses, and evolved the following:

ODE TO THE PLANET MARS

Red star of War! while armies sleep,  
To march to slaughter at the dawn,  
'Tis mine a faithful watch to keep,  
Lest suddenly the foe come on.

I peer into the gloomy wood,  
Alarmed at some portentous sound,  
Then gaze on thee, red orb of blood,  
Whose beams a warring world confound.

O, from among the stars retire,  
Elsewhere send forth thy rays malign,  
Thou baleful globe of restless fire,  
Man's blood is poured for thee like wine.

The next afternoon I strolled along our lines to view the stirring operations in progress. Mounting a breastwork, I walked on the top of it for more than a mile, and was told by an officer that to his personal knowledge, it extended three miles beyond that point. It was occupied by troops, of course, with batteries at intervals.

I had no sooner returned from this ramble than the pickets and skirmishers of our part of the line were driven in by the Confederates, with much shooting, and many piercing variations of the famous "rebel yell". The drums rolled and the troops fell in everywhere; the pickets were promptly reinforced and the enemy was driven back. Our brigade was ordered to pack up, send tents, wagons, and baggage to the rear, and be ready to move at a moment's notice.

In the afternoon the skirmish line was again driven in, and rebel batteries opened on our bivouac, pelting us in a lively manner. Most of the missiles were shells. Our batteries responded, and for a time it sounded as though the battle we had been so long expecting was really about to commence. A regiment of infantry went on the double-quick down into the woods, and after some heavy volleys of musketry, we heard that one of the enemy's batteries had been captured. General Morgan L. Smith's brigade had a sharp fight that day also, somewhere on the line beyond us. All day long, and through most of the night, the booming of cannon and rattle of small

arms was heard along the front of the army, which must have been a distance of ten or fifteen miles.

On the next day a heavy thunder storm swept over the camps and lines of both armies. Peals of thunder echoed and bellowed through the wide woods, as though in rivalry of the noise of cannonading.

Our part of the line was close to Corinth then — so close that when the universal uproar quieted some we could hear the whistling of locomotives and the rumbling of trains. Deserters came stealing across to our picket lines daily, to surrender. They told a uniform tale of miserable rations, half-rations, impressments, and military executions. A general conscription act was being enforced with great severity, and, as Grant afterwards tersely expressed it, the Confederate government was robbing the cradle and the grave to fill its armies. Grey-haired men and half-grown boys were alike dragged from home to become food for powder. These deserters also said a scarcity of water was causing sickness and many deaths in Beauregard's camps. Not only was water scarce, but foul water had to be used, greatly injuring the health of the troops.

Water was also scarce in the Union camps, at the front of our division at least, and on May 21st a bloody engagement occurred for the possession of a creek that lay between the rival skirmish lines. A party of the enemy stole through the woods to obtain water, and found a lot of our pickets at the creek. A fight ensued, both sides being reinforced, and after



obstinate combat our men held possession of the creek. A few hours afterwards the enemy shelled our camps, picket reserves, and skirmish lines viciously; our batteries replied with spirit, and some heavy volleys of musketry indicated that another fight for water had probably commenced. All day long the skirmishers of the two armies blazed away at one another, the firing at times almost rising to the dignity of a battle. Frequently artillery was brought into action to prevent the pickets of one side from driving their adversaries back upon the main body. The opposing armies lay like two sullen monsters slowly gathering strength for an impending death struggle.

At this time the weather was delightful, for the line of battle ran through a forest apparently boundless. The troops—in our vicinity at least—had fully stripped for action, being without tents, wagons, or baggage, well supplied with ammunition, and ready to fight at a minute's notice. Our sleeping apartments consisted mainly of rustic bowers formed of the boughs and branches of trees. Not unfrequently the recumbent warrior was roused from gentle dreams of lady love or home by cold contact with an intruding snake or lizard. Though snakes abounded in the South and often shared a soldier's bed, I never heard of anyone being bitten. A general impression prevailed that snakes would not bite a sleeping man.

The twenty-sixth of May found us in the reserve,

the army having made another lunge forward (and covered its front with earthworks), leaving our brigade a trifle to the rear. Everything being placid around us, the colonel had excuse for his favorite pastime. He trotted us out to the drill ground and gave us three hours of company drill in the forenoon and four hours of battalion drill in the afternoon, which we thought sufficient in view of the balmy weather.

On May 28th our regiment had its first formal military burial. We had buried plenty of men, but not in regulation style. A comrade having died, the colonel improved the opportunity to show us how the government desired to have us buried. The body was laid out in uniform on a stretcher, and borne through camp to the melancholy rolling of muffled drums. An escort marched with arms reversed. The bottom of the grave having first been strewn with green boughs and green leaves, the body was rolled in a blanket and respectfully lowered to place. Over it other leaves and boughs were strewn. In a gentle manner earth was spilled in till the corpse was covered, then the grave was filled up. The firing squad discharged three volleys over the grave, and the detail marched back to quarters to the sound of lively music.

At daylight on the morning of May 30th our regiment passed the outer intrenchments of the army. Leaving five companies on reserve, the rest of us deployed in the woods and relieved part of the troops

on the skirmish line. Soon after sunrise extraordinary explosions, apparently within the enemy's lines, excited universal attention. The roar was not like cannonading precisely, nor very much like thunder. We had never heard the like of it before. An officer said it was the firing of mortars by some of Pope's troops. We were in thick woods. No Confederates had yet been seen. Indeed, we had received no instructions to hunt for them, though we thought they could be readily found if wanted. These heavy explosions, however, suggested the possibility that Corinth was being evacuated — that the enemy was blowing up his powder magazines.

After a brief consultation, the commanding officer of that part of the picket line ordered Lieutenant Thomas Purcell, of our company, and our fourth corporal to go forward and ascertain if any Confederate sharpshooters were in front of us. I had permission to go also. Cocking our muskets and holding them in readiness to fire, the corporal and I advanced with the lieutenant. We stealthily threaded our way through an intervening wood and reached the edge of a clearing. After looking about carefully in every direction, and seeing no signs of the enemy, we decided to cross the clearing. On the other side of it was a little grove where we feared we might be captured or killed, but on entering it we found no one there. It occupied the crest of a slight eminence. The quietness around rendered us bolder, and we passed on through the grove.



At the opposite border, we came in full view of Beauregard's breastworks, forts, and intrenchments, stretching away for miles on either side. They appeared utterly deserted. Not a flag or soldier was visible anywhere. In front of us was an abatis of fallen trees, beyond which ran a line of rifle trenches for sharpshooters, but we could see nobody over there. The corporal was sent back to report what he knew, and to say that Corinth was evacuated without a doubt.

The lieutenant and I then made a bold march for the rifle pits, and finding them unoccupied, became perfectly satisfied that the Confederate army was gone. There might be stragglers or a rear guard of skirmishers on the high hill, but in some excitement we continued on till we reached the main breastwork of Beauregard's line. It was of earth, twelve feet high at that point, and had embrasures, at intervals, for heavy artillery. Mounting the work, we took off our hats and gave three cheers for the Union army. As far as the eye could see were the formidable works of the foe, but in them we saw no defenders.

We had not been there many minutes before the space between our picket line and the rebel fortifications was dotted with scouts and skirmishers who had heard the tidings and ran across to see for themselves. Cheer after cheer went up from little groups, then the skirmish line caught the contagion, and thence it spread to the line of battle, which made the woods ring with triumphal cheers. Bands followed

quickly with victorious music; here and there a regiment moved across to plant its flag on the walls of the famous stronghold; and thousands of troops were soon in eager but vain pursuit of the foe.

CLINT PARKHURST

## The Iowa Thespians

Amusements during the thirties in the outpost settlement of Dubuque, or in any of the border towns, were none too plentiful. True, the Lafayette Circus Company of New York had performed for several nights to large audiences in Dubuque, a menagerie of wild animals had been exhibited at settlements along the Mississippi River, and a few strolling mimics, singers, and gymnasts had displayed their skill in the dining rooms of the taverns at Davenport, Bloomington (Muscatine), and Burlington, but for the most part the tragic muse was unwooded in the Iowa country.

Partly to relieve the monotony of the long winter evenings and partly to satisfy natural dramatic inclinations, a group of young men in Dubuque organized the Iowa Thespian Association early in 1838. The lure of the footlights and the desire to tread the boards in sock and buskin have always possessed fascination. The formation of this band of players — probably the first amateur dramatic company on Iowa soil — was prompted by the same charm of the stage that to-day attracts members into the Drama League and invigorates the Little Theatre movement.

The Thespian Association was fortunate in selecting a place for their theater that was already well



and favorably known in the community. The Shakespeare Coffee House and Free Admission News Room, maintained by Charles Corkery in a two-story building near the corner of Main and Second streets, had been opened a short time before. The *Iowa News* for November 15, 1837, carried his opening announcement which called the attention of the public to the attractions of the place. Patrons were to enjoy free use of legislative and congressional proceedings and newspapers from all parts of the Union, Canada, and Texas, as well as ready access to a superior and well selected assortment of wines, liquors, and cordials at the bar "cash up". The large upstairs room of this popular building was selected by the Thespians as the scene of their theatricals and was given the appropriate name of Shakespeare Hall.

The young men proceeded to rearrange the room in a comfortable style well adapted to their needs. A stage was built across one corner at an elevation of three or four feet above the floor. The body of the hall was filled with rows of seats, and the Thespian artist spread lurid colors on the scenery and the front drop.

When the sun had disappeared behind the high bluffs to the West and darkness had fallen upon the frozen Mississippi the amateur actors met in Shakespeare Hall to rehearse their plays and songs. The crackling oak logs in the huge fireplace and the semi-circle of sputtering candle footlights created an

atmosphere that incited them to noble efforts. Nor did they hesitate to attempt the heaviest rôles in the leading plays of the day — such as the thrilling historical drama, “England’s Iron Days”, and the notable success, “Pizarro”, by August F. F. von Kotzebue, which had been the most popular play in England for a decade or more.

An item in the *Iowa News* for February 3, 1838, reported that some of the parts in the early productions of the Association “were admirably played, and all the plays were well received and applauded. Several national and sentimental songs were sung, in a beautiful strain, by a young gentleman possessed of musical powers which if cultivated, bid fair to rival the best vocalists of the day.” Shakespeare Hall was recommended to the lovers of mirth as a place well calculated to drive dull care away during a long winter evening.

The most pretentious offering of the Iowa Thespians during the first season of their existence was a patriotic thriller in five acts, entitled “The Glory of Columbia her Yeomanry” by William Dunlap, the father of the American drama. It had been written for a Fourth of July production by its manager-author and had been played at the Park Theatre in New York for the first time in 1803. Under the capable leadership and direction of Thomas C. Fassett, A. J. Anderson, and George L. Nightingale the large cast became letter perfect in their lines and proficient in the stage business of the play. At the

same time other members of the Thespians practiced a number of songs for the afterpiece, without which no theatrical performance was complete in those days.

The following advertisement, one column wide and two inches long, appeared in the *Iowa News* on February 24, 1838, announcing the event of the season to the people of Dubuque.

## THEATRICAL

### THE IOWA THESPIAN ASSOCIATION


#### WILL PERFORM

On Monday night, the 26th inst., in DuBuque at the Shakspeare House, the much admired play of

### THE GLORY OF COLUMBIA

(By WILLIAM DUNLAP, Esq.)

And conclude with a variety of Songs, Duets, Trios.  
N. B. Children under 10 years of age not admitted.

 Tickets to be had at the bar of the Shakspeare.

The performance attracted an appreciative audience that filled the hall to overflowing, and many were denied admission for lack of room. Great was the satisfaction and loud the applause of the early patrons of the drama as the curtain fell upon the successive acts of the patriotic play. No doubt the enthusiastic and noisy appreciation mounted also with each visit between acts to the hospitable bar



below. In fact, the play proved so popular that the Iowa Thespians were obliged to repeat it on the next Saturday night, March 3, 1838. At this performance they inserted as an added attraction for the after-piece the laughable farce, "Gretna Green".

All in all, the first season of the Iowa Thespian Association proved more successful than the sanguine hopes of its founders had anticipated and plans were made for a longer and more elaborate dramatic season the following winter.

The second year of the organization was made noteworthy by the visit of the McKenzie-Jefferson company, the first troupe of professional actors with a metropolitan reputation to visit the newly created Territory of Iowa. The group included Alexander McKenzie and his wife, Joseph Jefferson, his wife, daughter, and son, Joseph (Rip), then a boy of ten, Germon, Leicester, Burke, Warren, Sankey, Wright, Stafford, and Mesdames Germon and Ingersoll.

They had come on a barnstorming trip by the lake route to open a new theater in the town of Chicago, then a place of some two thousand people. It was the first lap of a roving trip through the West and South. The Jeffersons and their troupe "passed Indians, and glided by small villages, destined some day to become great cities." On the way to Dubuque "the company's scenery dropped into the Mississippi River, while forest and castle ran away in streaks of color across the canvas. Jefferson III nothing daunted, went courageously to work, re-

painting the smeared landscapes." On another occasion "these travellers got into trouble, where a lawyer had to be called in. They employed a gaunt and awkward looking man — none other than Abraham Lincoln — to aid them in their difficulties." For a time "the father of 'Rip' turned sign-painter for the nonce." Again the Jefferson family went "down-stream on a raft, with scenery serving as sails, whole fields and balustrades flung to the breeze." Sometimes barns "were fitted up as theatres; candles spilled wax around, and shed a dim, flickering light on a squalid room. Not frills and fancies, but rough, healthy democracy greeted them every where."

That part of the trip which took the company overland from Chicago to Galena, thence up the frozen Mississippi to Dubuque, is best described by Joseph Jefferson in his delightful autobiography.

"After a short season in Chicago, with the varying success which in those days always attended the drama, the company went to Galena for a short season, traveling in open wagons over the prairie. Our seats were the trunks that contained the ward-robe — those old-fashioned hair trunks of a mottled and spotted character made from the skins of defunct circus horses: 'To what base uses we may return!' These smooth hair trunks, with geometrical problems in brass tacks ornamenting their surface, would have made slippery seats even on a macadamized road, so one may imagine the difficulty we had in

holding on while jolting over a rough prairie. Nothing short of a severe pressure on the brass tacks and a convulsive grip of the handles could have kept us in position; and whenever a treacherous handle gave way our company was for the time being just one member short. As we were not an express mail-train, of course we were allowed more than twenty minutes for refreshments. The only difficulty was the refreshments. We stopped at farm-houses on the way for this uncertain necessity, and they were far apart. If the roads were heavy and the horses jaded, those actors who had tender hearts and tough limbs jumped out and walked to ease the poor brutes. Often I have seen my father trudging along ahead of the wagon, smoking his pipe, and I have no doubt thinking of the large fortune he was going to make in the next town, now and then looking back with his light blue eyes, giving my mother a cheerful nod which plainly said: 'I'm all right. This is splendid; nothing could be finer.' If it rained he was glad it was not snowing; if it snowed he was thankful it was not raining. This contented nature was his only inheritance; but it was better than a fortune made in Galena or anywhere else, for nothing could rob him of it.

"We travelled from Galena to Dubuque on the frozen river in sleighs — smoother work than the roughly rutted roads of the prairie; but it was a perilous journey, for a warm spell had set in and made the ice sloppy and unsafe. We would some-



times hear it crack and see it bend under our horses' feet: now a long-drawn breath of relief as we passed some dangerous spot, then a convulsive grasping of our nearest companion as the ice groaned and shook beneath us. Well, the passengers arrived safe, but, horror to relate! the sleigh containing the baggage, private and public, with the scenery and properties, green curtain and drop, broke through the ice and tumbled into the Mississippi. My poor mother was in tears, but my father was in high spirits at his good luck, as he called it—because there was a sand-bar where the sleigh went in! So the things were saved at last, though in a forlorn condition. The opening had to be delayed in order to dry the wardrobe and smooth the scenery.

“The halls of the hotel were strung with clothes-lines, and the costumes of all nations festooned the doors of the bedrooms, so that when an unsuspecting boarder came out suddenly into the entry he was likely to run his head into a damp ‘Roman’ shirt, or perhaps have the legs of a soaking pair of red tights dangling around his neck. Mildew filled the air. The gilded pasteboard helmets fared the worst. They had succumbed to the softening influences of the Mississippi, and were as battered and out of shape as if they had gone through the pass of Thermopylae. Limp leggins of scale armor hung wet and dejected from the lines; low-spirited cocked hats were piled up in a corner; rough-dried court coats stretched their arms out as if in the agony of drown-

ing, as though they would say, 'Help me, Cassius, or I sink.' Theatrical scenery at its best looks pale and shabby in the daytime, but a well-worn set after a six-hours' bath in a river presents the most woe-begone appearance that can well be imagined; the sky and water of the marine had so mingled with each other that the horizon line had quite disappeared. My father had painted the scenery, and he was not a little crestfallen as he looked upon the ruins: a wood scene had amalgamated with a Roman street painted on the back of it, and had so run into stains and winding streaks that he said it looked like a large map of South America; and, pointing out the Andes with his cane, he humorously traced the Amazon to its source. Of course this mishap on the river delayed the opening for a week. In the mean time the scenery had to be repainted and the wardrobe put in order: many of the things were ruined, and the helmets defied repair."

When the damage resulting from the river mishap had been repaired as far as was possible the company began an eleven day run at Shakespeare Hall. They presented the popular plays of the season — the comedies, "Honeymoon", "How to Rule a Wife", and "The Waterman"; and the classics, "Othello", "Charles II", "Rob Roy", "McGregor", and "Richard III". Germon's singing of the "Lass o' Gowrie" and Burke's dancing the "Sailor's Hornpipe" were favorite parts of the afterpiece performances while the acting of juvenile parts by

young Joseph Jefferson and his sister was a revelation to the frontier audience. Leicester as a tragedian and Germon as a villain became favorites of the theatergoers, while Joseph Jefferson, Sr., the comedian, could always bring roars of laughter. Crowded halls greeted the actors when the curtain rose every evening at 6:30 o'clock, and for three hours and a half the townspeople and visitors at the taverns reveled in tragedy and comedy. Even the property man who replaced the burned down candle footlights between the big show and the afterpiece received his share of applause. Adults paid one dollar to see a performance, children fifty cents.

The engagement at Dubuque was one of the most successful experienced by the company on its western tour, both from the financial aspect and from the standpoint of appreciation. Well pleased with their first visit to Iowa, the troupe left the lead-mine town to visit other places down the Mississippi.

The Iowa Thespian Association and Shakespeare Hall had paved the way for the professionals. Without the general interest in the drama which had been fostered and developed, the famous Joseph Jefferson might have been received no more enthusiastically in Dubuque than he had been in Chicago.

Although the first two seasons of the Iowa Thespians had indicated that an amateur stock company in the rapidly growing town of Dubuque filled a community demand, interest waned in a few years and the organization disbanded. No longer could a guest



at Timothy Fanning's Jefferson House or the visitor at Richard Plumbe's Washington Hotel procure a ticket to the Shakespeare Coffee House to see Nightingale and his mummers tear a passion to tatters or portray comedy with the broad strokes then so popular. Shakespeare Hall ceased to be classed with the places of intellectual amusement, but the tap room below continued to dispense cheer to its patrons until the old frame building gave way to the business enterprise of a new era.

BRUCE E. MAHAN



## Pleasant Hill Dramatics

Back in the amiable eighties, when life was more placid and less hurried than now, the fathers and mothers of the boys and girls who live in the country to-day found their winter amusements nearer home than the moving picture show or public dance in town.

Now the rural mail carrier or the telephone will supply the latest news of commercial entertainment on the spur of the moment, while the automobile makes access to the city all too easy. Then the people who lived in the country were dependent upon their own resources for social pleasure, and the whole community participated in the wholesome fun.

Just after the Civil War a group of farmers settled on the rolling prairies a few miles west of Bedford. There, during the sixties and early seventies, they reared their families. The men exchanged work at harvest and threshing time, the women came together in a social way at quiltings, and the children attended the Pleasant Hill district school. As the young people grew up they attended parties and indulged in the favorite games of Miller Boy and Skip-to-My-Lou. During the winter of 1881-1882 they attended a singing school together.

Early in the winter of 1886 some of the boys and girls of the Pleasant Hill district, who had been the

best talent at the schoolhouse "Literary" and who had sat enthralled when they attended an occasional performance by some travelling troupe in the Bedford opera house, thought that they would stage some plays. They were confident of success. Couldn't they recite the poems and dialogues in McGuffey's *Sixth Reader* as well as the actor folk they had seen in town? Couldn't they build a stage in the front part of the schoolhouse?

The idea fired the imagination and a meeting was held one night in December at the home of Frances Titus to perfect the plans. The would-be actors assembled in the parlor, a square room equipped with severely plain furniture and a rag carpet. On the oval-topped walnut center table a large oil lamp threw its rays into the eager faces of these devotees of the drama.

There was handsome Frank Crossen who had a fondness for the rôle of a villain. James Dougherty and Huston Cox leaned toward character parts, and Sen Campbell was willing to try any rôle. Jolly Roe Rubart delighted in comedy, while Ellis Titus preferred to attempt juvenile characters. Then there was pretty May Hiatt, the teacher at Pleasant Hill, stately Ida Rubart, and vivacious Vira Titus for the feminine parts of the contemplated productions.

Each agreed to accept a part, to learn the lines, and to assist in the details of production. Enthusiasm waxed jubilant as they discussed the merits of the farce, "Turn Him Out", which one of the group

had brought to the meeting. Pans of pop corn and bowls of cracked hickory nuts were consumed as the young folks talked of the time and place of holding rehearsals, and the oak chunks in the cast-iron stove had burned to glowing coals before the visitors donned overshoes, heavy coats, and mufflers to depart for home in their bobsleds.

Rehearsals were held at the homes of the players until about a week before the time set for the public performance. Then evening meetings took place at the schoolhouse, still warm from the big fire left in the stove by the teacher when she departed after school closed for the afternoon.

A few days before the date of the show the boys of the club hauled a load of planks from town for the stage, which they erected across the front end of the schoolroom. A wire stretched from one side-wall to the other held the dark cambric curtain which had been made by the girls and fastened to small rings so that the two halves could be pulled aside. The handy mechanic of the group built side panels for the stage out of pine strips and covered these with white paper on which he drew windows and baseboards with charcoal. Openings were left for entrances on both sides, the front wall of the schoolroom served as the back wall of the stage, and with this arrangement the actors had a playing space about twelve feet wide, six feet deep, and two feet above the floor.

The hall, which extended entirely across the front of the building, was transformed into dressing



rooms. There the actors concealed themselves while the patrons paid their ten cents admission and climbed over the stage to reach the double seats then in vogue in country schools. No performance could begin until the audience had assembled, for the improvised theater boasted no entrance except the one over the stage. There was always a scramble for the long recitation bench which constituted the first row of seats.

The mirror reflectors on the kerosene lamps in swinging brackets along the walls were turned so that the light was directed upon the stage. No footlights were used. Furniture, rugs, and curtains for the set were brought from home by the actors themselves.

What did it matter if occasionally someone forgot his lines in an exciting climax — the prompter was ready with the missing cue. And who cared if the villain's mustache and black beard, loosened by perspiration, threatened to drop off before the end of the act? The audience appreciated such a mishap as much or more than a flawless performance. If the pistol failed to go off the first time the trigger was pulled and the intended victim shouted, "I'm shot!" before the shot was fired, the crowd howled with delight. To the credit of the Pleasant Hill Dramatic Club be it said, however, that such miscues were the exception. The careful rehearsals of the enthusiastic young actors produced better plays than the average of amateur performances. Old-



timers still remember the four-act drama, "Better Than Gold", and the three-act comedy, "The Flower of the Family", while the participants themselves revel in the memory of the fun of rehearsals and the thrills of the final performance.

During two winters the club produced one-act sketches and longer plays. Their object was not mercenary: they engaged in the enterprise solely for their own amusement and the entertainment of the community. With the proceeds they paid for the curtain, rented the planks for the stage, had their picture taken by the town photographer, enjoyed an occasional oyster party, and divided the balance among the members.

It was not long, however, before some of the members married and moved to distant farms. Others left the homesteads to engage in business in town, or, like their parents two decades before, set out for the West. The Dramatic Club was disbanded, but the events of the winters of 1886 and 1887 at Pleasant Hill remain as cherished memories.

BRUCE E. MAHAN

## Comment by the Editor

### THE ART OF HISTORY

The historian, in some respects, is as much of an artist as the poet or sculptor. His materials are essentially the same, for he too depicts the spirit of man and carves from the solid mass of human events an image of the times.

History is a "Tower of Experience, which Time has built amidst the endless fields of bygone ages." It is a various structure, composed of infinite details. The archeozoic rocks form its foundation, while the story of life is the superstructure. It contains the joys and sorrows, hopes and fears, thoughts and deeds of all mankind. Nor is the trivial conduct of the least of these to be ignored, for the career of each is the experience of the race.

It is for the historian to vitalize the past. Let him people again the land and sea, the cities and farms and highways with the men and women of yesterday. Let him tell of their goings and comings, of their manners, amusements, apparel, and customs no less than their vices and glorious exploits. The pageant should be viewed in perspective. Let the apparent confusion and discord be symphonized into the harmonious trend of events.

The dictionary declares that history is devoid of romance. If that is true then history portrays

falsely the course of human affairs, for comedy and tragedy, adventure, love, and character building are the substance of every-day life. The story of each frontier village and latter-day city, the affairs of any rural countryside, the lives of men and women both great and humble—the history of Iowa—abounds in romance. Here is the stuff of which fiction is made, and the historian may revel in the knowledge that fact is as thrilling as fancy.

If the past is to live the writer of history must take note of the romance that governs the facts. He must perceive and appraise with the skill of an artist, for he writes the drama of truth. He may catch the high lights, but he must not distort them. It is a difficult task. It involves clear thought, steady purpose, broad comprehension, quick imagination, and the capacity to impart the vision to others.

J. E. B.





# The **PALIMPSEST**

FEBRUARY 1923

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## THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE

The PALIMPSEST, issued monthly by the State Historical Society of Iowa, is devoted to the dissemination of Iowa History. Supplementing the other publications of this Society, it aims to present the materials of Iowa History in a form that is attractive and a style that is popular in the best sense—to the end that the story of our Commonwealth may be more widely read and cherished.

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH

*Superintendent*

## THE MEANING OF PALIMPSESTS

In early times palimpsests were parchments or other materials from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete; and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the records of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

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# THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY JOHN ELY BRIGGS

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## A Confederate Spy

A glamour of romance and mystery still clings to the old Chew mansion in Cascade. The very appearance of the house with its massive walls of solid stone, high gable roofs, and huge chimneys has always inspired interest and wonder. Built in Civil War days by Thomas J. Chew, a pioneer of southern nativity, the edifice was constructed on the generous design of a plantation home.

Enormous blocks of limestone for the thick walls were quarried from the bluffs along the North Fork of the Maquoketa River, while the studding, rafters, and heavy joists were of native oak cut to proper dimensions in the Chew sawmill. The spacious living room was finished with highly polished cherry, oak was used for the woodwork in the large library, the dining room, and the hallways, some of the chambers were finished in cherry and some in oak, while unvarnished walnut and cherry were used in

the rooms on the third floor. In every room of the house there was a great stone fireplace.

Too spacious for a dwelling, the mansion proved to be an expensive and unsatisfactory possession for its various owners after the Chews moved away, and more than once the suggestion was made that the great house should be converted into a hospital. At last the property was obtained by the school board and now the stately old residence is the home of the East Cascade High School.

But not even transformation into a schoolhouse has been sufficient to dispel entirely the atmosphere of former glory. The children notice the evidences of the magnificence of sixty years ago, and they are reminded of days that are gone and of the stirring times that the old house has witnessed. In one of the rooms, where the boys and girls of to-day follow the campaigns of Caesar in Gaul or of Sherman in Georgia and Lee in Virginia, John Yates Beall, master in the Confederate navy and picturesque marauder, once found refuge and care while he was recovering from a wound received in piercing the Union lines on his dangerous trip to Canada.

This is the story of the Cascade spy.

Weary and wounded, John Y. Beall, in the spring of 1864, crept to the Chew home for refuge. His brother had come to Cascade some time before to engage in the milling business with Thomas Chew, whose wife's people, the Bemis family of Maryland, and the Bealls of Virginia had been friends in the

South. For these reasons the sick and travel-worn Confederate hoped to receive aid and concealment at the Chew homestead until he recovered sufficiently to continue his journey.

He arrived just at dusk about the first of June and stopped in a dark corner at the rear of the house. Mrs. Chew came outside for a bucket of water and he called to her, saying, "It's John Beall, I'm wounded and I've come to you for protection." She replied that she would be glad to aid him but that she must first obtain the consent of Mr. Chew. She took him inside, gave him his supper, and led him upstairs to a bedroom. Then she laid the case before her husband and asked what she should do. "Maggie", he said, "attend to his wound as a man, but I do not want to know anything about him as a rebel."

Mrs. Chew dressed his bullet wound herself, and removed some small pieces of bone. During the long hot summer of 1864 she nursed the Confederate refugee back to health and strength, and his presence at the Chew home was known only to a few intimate friends of the family.

Beall was a quiet guest who spent much of the time in reading the Bible which Stonewall Jackson had given him. Every night he went over part of the Episcopalian service, while at other times he browsed through the books belonging to his host. His early schooling in Virginia and his studies in England had made him a gentleman of culture and



refinement — the chivalrous type of southerner so well known in fiction. He never revealed to his benefactors the real reason for his trip north, and after his departure they were surprised and shocked at the swift-moving events of his subsequent career.

Before coming to Cascade the spectacular exploits of John Y. Beall had made him a marked man. With a small band of kindred adventurers he had led an attack upon Union gunboats on the Rappahannock River and effected their capture. He had directed the destruction of light houses along the Virginia shore, and his command had succeeded in capturing Union transports off the Atlantic coast.

On the eighteenth of September, 1863, Beall, with a small party of picked men, had crossed the bay from Matthew's Point, Virginia, and on the following day he captured the United States schooner, *Alliance*, loaded with sutler's goods. Two days later his small force seized the schooners, *J. J. Houseman*, *Samuel Pearsall*, and *Alexandria*, captured the crews, and, lashing the helms and setting the sails, turned the vessels adrift. Five days afterward a Union blockader sighted the *Alliance*, with the Confederates on board, stuck on a sand bar at Mifford Haven. The Yankees opened fire, but the rebels set fire to the vessel and escaped.

For almost a month Beall and his men continued their activities along the Virginia coast, swooping down here, striking there, and hovering at times dangerously near the Union pickets and coast guards

who were alert for their capture. Finally, however, part of the command, in making a landing on the shore of Chesapeake Bay, were met by an equal number of coast guards, and after a spirited engagement the Confederates surrendered. The next day the reckless leader himself and nine more of his men were captured by a determined force from one of the Union coasting vessels. Both groups of prisoners were taken to Fort McHenry, where they were put in chains and regarded as pirates rather than as prisoners of war.

This treatment brought forth a vigorous protest from Robert Ould, Confederate agent of exchange, who informed the Union agent that the Confederate government had placed an equal number of officers and seamen of the United States navy in close confinement in irons as a retaliatory measure and that they were held as hostages for the proper treatment of Beall and his men. This protest succeeded ultimately in accomplishing its purpose, for in January, 1864, the Confederate prisoners were removed from Fort McHenry to Fort Norfolk, their irons struck off, and their status made that of prisoners of war.

Then Beall escaped.

In May, 1864, he wrote to the Secretary of War of the Confederacy offering to raise a small company of trustworthy men for special service along the northern boundary of the United States. President Jefferson Davis had already sent Jacob Thompson, who had been Secretary of the Interior under Presi-



dent James Buchanan, to Canada to direct a campaign of terrorization whereby the morale of the Union might be broken. This work called for courage and intelligence, the type of service for which Beall was admirably fitted and to which his love of adventure allured him. His offer was accepted and he and his men in civilian garb set out for Canada as individuals and by separate routes.

Ill fortune, however, marked this adventure from the start. In making his way through the Union lines Beall received the bullet wound which forced him to seek refuge with friends at Cascade and delayed his arrival at Windsor, Canada, for over three months. This inauspicious beginning of his new effort in behalf of the lost cause was a portent of ill omen, but with characteristic bravery he pushed on as soon as he had recovered from his injury and regained his strength.

In the meantime, the audacious plot in which Beall was destined to play a leading rôle had assumed definite form and the preliminary work had been accomplished. Jacob Thompson, from his headquarters at Windsor, sent Captain Charles H. Cole, formerly of N. B. Forrest's command, around the lakes as a lower deck passenger with instructions to become familiar with the channels, the approaches to the harbors, the strength of each prison camp, and especially to obtain all possible information about the war steamer *Michigan* on Lake Erie. Cole was given about four thousand dollars in gold which he



was to spend in establishing friendly relations with the officers and crew of the gunboat. When he succeeded with this part of the plot, Thompson planned to send Beall and his men across the lake on a passenger steamer which they would seize en route, and with it they were to capture the gunboat in the harbor of Sandusky. With the *Michigan* in their possession the Confederates hoped to overpower the guards at Johnson's Island near Sandusky and liberate nearly three thousand southern officers confined there who, mounted, armed, and guarded by the boat, would march along the lake to Cleveland. From Cleveland the Confederate officers proposed to turn south to Wheeling, thence to Virginia, and rejoin their commands. Such a bold coup, it was thought, would strike terror into the hearts of the Yankees, and at the same time revive the hopes of the South.

Cole reported progress to Thompson: he felt that his part of the job was succeeding and that the officers who could not be bribed could be rendered helpless by being drugged at a wine party on board the gunboat on the night of the capture. Accordingly, the night of September 19, 1864, was selected for the attempt. Prearranged signals were to let Beall know when Cole's part of the plot had been accomplished.

Some details of the plot leaked out, however. On Saturday night, the seventeenth of September, a stranger called upon Lieutenant Colonel B. H. Hill,

acting assistant provost marshal of Michigan, at his hotel in Detroit and introduced himself as a former Confederate soldier then a refugee in Canada. He told Hill that some of the officers and men of the steamboat, *Michigan*, on Lake Erie had been tampered with by one of Thompson's agents and that it was Thompson's intention to send a party from Windsor to capture the gunboat. The informant said that he had been asked to join the party and had consented to do so in order to learn the details of the plot. He added that he would return on the following night with more information. Hill did not fully credit the story because rumors of projected enterprises to commit depredations on the lake coasts of the United States by Confederate refugees in Canada had been current for more than a year, yet the man's earnestness led Hill to telegraph Captain J. C. Carter, the commanding officer of the *Michigan*, to be on his guard.

True to his word the stranger returned on the following evening and told Hill that a man by the name of Cole was the Confederate agent at Sandusky who had attempted to bribe the officers of the gunboat and that he planned to drug those who could not be bought. He said, furthermore, that the attacking party planned to take passage on board the *Philo Parsons*, a passenger packet which made regular trips between Detroit and Sandusky, to take possession of the vessel out on the lake, and then to capture the *Michigan*. This more detailed informa-

tion of the plot was telegraphed immediately to Captain Carter who had Cole seized and imprisoned at once and the boat cleared for action to bag the marauding party. Provost Marshal Hill thought it advisable to let the enterprise proceed so that the entire party might be captured in the harbor of Sandusky rather than to arouse the suspicions of the plotters by placing soldiers on board the *Philo Parsons* to prevent the start of the expedition. To do this, he thought, would simply postpone the attempt to another time when he might not be forewarned.

Beall and his men, never dreaming that the details of the plot were already in the hands of their enemies, proceeded with their part of the scheme. About eight o'clock on Sunday night, September 18th, a fashionably dressed young man came on board the *Philo Parsons* which was lying at the docks at Detroit. He asked the clerk if the boat would stop in the morning at Sandwich, three miles below on the Canadian shore, to pick up a party of his friends who wanted to go to Kelley's Island on a pleasure trip. The clerk replied that the boat did not stop at Sandwich regularly but would do so for passengers. This satisfied the caller who then departed. This man was Bennett G. Burley, an acting master in the Confederate navy and Beall's assistant.

The next morning the *Philo Parsons* steamed away from the dock at Detroit with some forty pas-



sengers on board. Shortly after the vessel got under way the visitor of the night before came to the clerk and announced that his friends were waiting for the boat at Sandwich. The clerk reported this to Captain Sylvester F. Atwood, master of the boat, who called the stranger and asked why his friends had not come to Detroit to catch the steamer. Burley replied that one of them was lame and found it inconvenient to take the ferry.

Accordingly, the boat made the landing at Sandwich and four young fellows, one of whom limped, came on board. All of them were stylishly dressed in English clothes, and one carried a small hand satchel, the only baggage of the party. They were soon on intimate terms with the passengers and made themselves agreeable travelling companions. One of them, a young man of medium height, with brown hair, fair complexioned, and smooth shaven, was Beall himself. His evident culture and polished manners made him a favorite.

At Malden, about twenty miles below Detroit on the Canadian side, the steamer made its regular stop. Here a party of about twenty men came on board. They were all poorly dressed in ragged clothes that had apparently seen hard service, and two of the roughest looking in the lot lugged a heavy, old-fashioned, rope-bound trunk. All of the group were young except one who said he was a surgeon, and they explained that they were bound for Kelley's Island on a fishing trip. They paid their fare in

greenbacks and no sign of recognition passed between them and the four who came on board at Sandwich. Their number was not unusual and consequently excited no suspicion.

The steamer continued on its way, making the usual stops at North Bass, Middle Bass, and South Bass islands to discharge and take on passengers and freight. These islands lie about twenty-eight miles almost directly north of Sandusky. Captain Atwood left the boat at Middle Bass Island to spend the twenty-four hour interval before its return with his family, and the steamer proceeded under the command of DeWitt C. Nichols, mate and pilot.

Nothing suspicious had been observed up to this point although afterwards it was remembered that ten or twelve of the Malden crowd stayed on the upper deck and just after dinner the wheelman noticed two of them by the pilot house, two more by the wheelhouse, and two aft on the hurricane deck. One of the well dressed group asked the wheelman some questions about the course he was steering and borrowed his glass to look around.

From South Bass Island, the steamer proceeded to Kelley's Island, seven miles farther on, and made the regular landing there. When the boat drew up to the wharf four men came on board and one of them addressed a member of the Sandwich party, saying, "We have concluded to go to Sandusky."

None of those who had come on board at Sandwich and Malden left the boat at Kelley's Island,

and one of them told the clerk that they had decided to go on to Sandusky with the four who had just come on board.

The *Philo Parsons* left Kelley's Island about four o'clock in the afternoon and fifteen or twenty minutes later passed the *Island Queen*, another side-wheel steamer which made regular trips between Sandusky and the Bass islands. The boats passed at a distance of about twenty rods and no signals were exchanged.

Shortly after the *Philo Parsons* passed the *Island Queen* Beall accosted Nichols, then in command of the boat, and asked, "Are you captain of this boat?"

"No, sir;" Nichols answered, "I am mate."

"You have charge of her at present, have you not?"

"Yes, sir", replied the mate.

"Will you step back here for a minute? I want to talk to you."

The two men walked aft to a place near the smoke-stack on the hurricane deck where Beall stopped and said, "I am a Confederate officer. There are thirty of us, well armed. I seize the boat, and take you as a prisoner. You must pilot the boat as I direct you, and", pulling a revolver out of his pocket and showing it, "here are the tools to make you. Run down and lie off the harbor." He meant the harbor of Sandusky then about twelve miles distant.

In the meantime four of the party had come up to the clerk who was standing in front of his office and,



drawing revolvers, leveled them at him and threatened to kill him if he offered any resistance. He surrendered. In a flash the old black trunk which had been carried aboard at Malden was opened and the marauders armed themselves with the revolvers and hand axes which it contained. They fired a few shots and drove the frightened passengers forward to the cabin where they searched them for arms. Leaving the women and children in the cabin, the boarding party drove the men and crew down to the main deck and thence to the hold.

When the attack began the wheelman who was standing in the saloon heard a shot on deck, a yell, and then another shot. He hastened out on the main deck and saw a man with a cocked revolver in his hand chasing the fireman and shouting to the fugitive to go down the main hatch or he would shoot. The fireman escaped temporarily and the man turned to the wheelman repeating the same command. The latter told him to go to hell and started quickly to climb from the main deck to the upper deck. The pirate fired but missed, the ball passing between the legs of the fleeing wheelman.

Within a short time, however, Beall and his men had complete possession of the boat, and although several shots had been fired no one was injured. The fireman, engineer, and wheelman were left at their posts under guard and commanded to obey the orders of the leader. Beall ordered the mate to head the boat east and to keep on this tack until a good

view of the harbor of Sandusky was obtained. At about five o'clock a position was reached where the United States steamer, *Michigan*, was plainly visible. After a careful examination of the harbor from the point outside the bar, and after ascertaining the position of the gunboat, Beall learned from the mate that the wood supply was low. Therefore, he ordered the wheelman to turn back to the wooding station at Middle Bass Island, and the boat drew up to the wharf between seven and eight in the evening, just at dusk.

The Confederates fired two or three shots at the owner of the wood yard, then released some of the deck hands to help wood up. The captain of the *Philo Parsons* who had spent the afternoon at home did not see his vessel return but was informed of its arrival by a little boy who came running up to the captain's house much frightened and shouting that they were killing his father. The captain hurried to the dock and seeing several men running to and fro, approached them and asked what was up. Thereupon three or four of the men levelled their pistols at him and he was ordered aboard. Upon his refusal he was rushed up the plank and made a prisoner in the cabin of his own vessel.

About this time the *Island Queen* whistled for the wharf and came steaming up to the dock alongside the *Philo Parsons*. It was now eight o'clock and moonlight. Immediately all the Confederates who could be spared rushed on board the new arrival

and, yelling and firing their revolvers, they drove the passengers and crew aboard the *Philo Parsons*. Among the former were twenty-five Union soldiers — one-hundred-day men from Ohio returning to Toledo to be mustered out. They were unarmed and without a leader and so offered no resistance. The men were crowded into the hold, the women and children left in the cabin.

The engineer of the *Island Queen* was busy with his engines after he brought his vessel alongside the wharf and the first he knew of the attack was when he heard some one yell. As he looked around one of the attacking party fired and the ball, whizzing past his nose, entered his cheek and passed out at his ear. Although Beall's men fired several shots no one was wounded except the engineer, though some of the passengers were knocked down with the butt end of revolvers and with hand axes.

Before putting out on the lake again Beall paroled the passengers of both boats, the Union soldiers, the crew of the *Island Queen*, the captain and part of the crew of the *Philo Parsons*, and secured their promise not to leave the island nor to speak of what had occurred for twenty-four hours. He kept on board the captain, clerk, and wounded engineer of the *Island Queen*, and the mate, wheelman, and part of the crew of the *Philo Parsons*. Most of the baggage of the passengers was piled on the dock and the cargo of pig iron, furniture, and tobacco was thrown overboard.



Beall then headed the *Philo Parsons* out on the lake with the *Island Queen* in tow. A few miles out from Middle Bass Island the captors opened the sea valves of the towed vessel and cast her adrift to sink. Fortunately, before filling she drifted onto a sand bar and was removed a few days later without having suffered serious injury.

The Confederates then shaped a course for Sandusky, hiding the red and blue signal lights of the boat so that its course could not be detected. When the steamer reached a point opposite Marblehead Light outside the Bay of Sandusky the pilot told Beall that it was dangerous to attempt to run the channel at night for it was so narrow there was danger of running aground. Moreover, the signals by which Cole was to announce the success of his part of the plot had failed to appear. Beall called his men forward. After a brief consultation the Confederates decided to abandon the attack on the gunboat, *Michigan*. It was fortunate for them that they did, for both the commanding officer at Johnson's Island and Captain Carter of the *Michigan* were ready and waiting for the attack. Beall ordered the pilot to turn about and head the boat for Malden, Canada.

They passed the Bass islands under a full head of steam about one o'clock in the morning, slipped by Malden about four, and proceeded up the Canadian side of the Detroit River. A few miles above Malden the captors sent ashore a yawl boat loaded with plunder. Beall stopped the *Philo Parsons* also at

Fighting Point to put the crew ashore, keeping on board only three — the engineer, wheelman, and one other — for the rest of the trip. The boat arrived at the dock at Sandwich, Canada, about eight o'clock Tuesday morning.

One of the gang compelled the engineer to help smash the injection pipes of the vessel, while others carried ashore some cabin furniture and other plunder. Then, leaving the boat to sink, the Confederates, loaded down with bags of plunder, set off up the street of Sandwich. None of them were molested except two who were detained for a short time charged with violating the customs regulations by unloading goods without a license. The magistrate dismissed their case, however, and the entire group scattered throughout the country, most of them returning to the Confederacy. The *Philo Parsons* was saved by some of the crew before she filled and in a few days both of the captured vessels were making their regular trips again.

This audacious attempt by Beall and his men to capture the *Michigan* and to release the prisoners at Johnson's Island aroused the authorities to keep a careful watch for this bold plotter. The County Crown Attorney at Windsor assured the United States District Attorney of Michigan that he had received instructions from his government to spare no pains in bringing to justice those concerned with the plot. Burley, Beall's lieutenant, was arrested a few days afterward in Canada and later extradited



to the United States. Cole, who was confined on Johnson's Island and later at Fort Lafayette, was finally discharged on February 10, 1866. Thompson, the arch conspirator, seems to have escaped. He was afterward implicated in the assassination of President Lincoln.

On December 16, 1864, nearly three months after the lake episode, John S. Young, chief of the Metropolitan Detective Police, found and arrested Beall near the New York end of the suspension bridge over the Niagara River. He was fully identified by a witness who picked him out of a crowd in one of the rooms at police headquarters in New York. The witness stepped up to Beall and called him by name much to the discomfiture of the Confederate captain. After being thus identified the prisoner was confined in a cell at police headquarters, but having attempted to bribe one of the turnkeys by offering him \$3000 in gold for a chance to escape, he was removed to Fort Lafayette.

The military commission appointed to try his case convened on board the steamer, *Henry Burden*, while she was conveying Beall to Fort Lafayette, but as he desired a week's delay to procure counsel and to prepare his defense, it was granted him. The court martial met at Fort Lafayette on the morning of January 17, 1865, and adjourned until two days later, giving the prisoner that much more time to prepare his case. He asked that a fellow prisoner, Roger A. Pryor, be allowed to defend him, and this request



was forwarded by General John A. Dix to the Secretary of War. A reply was received two days later that under no circumstances could a prisoner of war be allowed to act as counsel for a person accused of being a spy. Hence another postponement of the trial was necessary while Beall secured other counsel.

Having engaged the professional services of James T. Brady, Beall's trial began February 10, 1865, with Brigadier General Fitz Henry Warren, formerly colonel of the First Iowa Volunteer Cavalry, as president. He was arraigned and tried under two charges: first, violation of the law of war, and second, acting as a spy. Under these charges it was specified that he seized and captured the *Philo Parsons* and *Island Queen* without lawful authority and by force of arms; that he acted as a spy near Kelley's Island, at Middle Bass Island, and at the suspension bridge; and that as a guerrilla he attempted to destroy lives and property by trying to wreck a train coming from the west to Buffalo. Beall attempted to justify his maneuvers on Lake Erie and his deeds in New York by showing that he was acting under the orders of Jefferson Davis and authorized agents of the Confederate government.

After a careful hearing of the evidence, the court found Beall guilty of both charges and on all the specifications save one in which the date had been stated erroneously. He was sentenced to be hanged and General Dix approved the sentence, directing it

to be executed on Governor's Island, Saturday, February 18th. Later a reprieve was granted until Friday, the twenty-fourth.

In desperation Beall wrote the following letter to the Confederate agent of exchange:

FORT COLUMBUS, *February 21, 1865.*

COL. R. OULD, *Commissioner of Exchange, Richmond, Va.:*

Sir: The proceedings of a military commission in my case published in the New York papers of the 15th instant made you and my Government aware of my sentence and doom. A reprieve, on account of some informality, from the 18th to the 24th was granted. The authorities are possessed of the facts in my case. They know that I acted under orders. I appeal to my Government to use its utmost efforts to protect me, and if unable to prevent my murder, to vindicate my reputation. I can only declare that I was no "spy" or "guerrilla," and am a true Confederate.

Respectfully,

JOHN Y. BEALL,  
*Acting Master, C. S. Navy.*

This letter, however, was not received until February twenty-seventh. Three days before, between noon and two o'clock in the afternoon, the commanding officer of Fort Columbus had carried out the sentence of the court and the spectacular career of John Y. Beall was ended.

BRUCE E. MAHAN

## Ventures in Wheat

It was thought, in the fall of 1845 and during the following winter, that there was going to be a big foreign demand for breadstuffs, on account of a great deficiency in the English crops. Consequently there was much speculation in breadstuffs in this country. At that time the firm of Burrows & Prettyman had been operating a produce house in Davenport for more than a year. We were doing business with the largest produce merchants in the United States, the Woodruff brothers, who maintained branches in St. Louis, New Orleans, and New York City. You could ship to any branch you preferred. It was a concern of unlimited means. The senior partner, James E. Woodruff, was the best business friend I ever had, and he was also the best business man I ever knew.

Mr. Woodruff thought there would be a sharp advance in the prices of breadstuffs before spring to supply the deficiency in the English market, and he wrote me repeatedly, urging me to buy every barrel of flour we could find and all the wheat and other provisions, and that we were at liberty to draw on him for one hundred thousand dollars for that purpose. If we were afraid to buy on our own account,

[This account of wheat speculation by a pioneer commission merchant in Davenport is adapted for THE PALIMPSEST from J. M. D. Burrows's *Fifty Years in Iowa*.—THE EDITOR]



he said to buy for him. He urged us so strongly and persistently that we followed his advice, buying on our own account. I visited every point, myself, as far as Dubuque, and bought every barrel of flour and all the grain I could find in New Albany, Savanna, Galena, and Dubuque, besides a large amount of provisions. We also sent an agent on the ice above Dubuque to visit every point and buy all the flour and grain he could find in store. Consequently, at the opening of navigation in the spring of 1846 we controlled the larger part of the produce in store above Davenport.

Then came trouble and disaster. The United States declared war against Mexico that spring, and everything collapsed. Prices tumbled more than one-half. The only way we could get to the seaboard was by the river to New Orleans and thence by sea to New York. The excitement then prevalent concerning privateers on the ocean almost suspended shipping. Insurance on the ocean advanced to ten per cent.

Soon after the opening of navigation, I began to move my winter accumulation, as I could see no prospect of any change for the better. I thought it best to face the music at once. Our flour, in store on the river, had been bought at from four dollars to four dollars and fifty cents per barrel and the wheat at an average of sixty cents a bushel. On arriving at St. Louis, the nominal price of flour was from two dollars to two dollars and twenty-five cents a barrel,

but no buyers; wheat was forty cents a bushel, for which there was a small local demand. Selling what wheat we could, we sent out flour and surplus wheat to New York, where it fared worse. Most of the flour became sour on the trip and did not net us over one dollar per barrel, while the wheat went for twenty-five cents a bushel. When all was sold, Burrows & Prettyman found themselves nearly bankrupt. I do not think we could have paid over twenty-five cents on the dollar, if we had been forced to close up our business.

During the following winter people began to get over their scare of the previous season and, a good foreign demand springing up, prices began to advance. Before the advance had fairly commenced, Woodruff, foreseeing what was going to happen, urged me to send out an agent at once and buy everything I could north of Davenport. I did so. People, remembering the disaster of the year before, were willing sellers.

About this time hogs had begun to be plentiful and we were packing so extensively that my winters were occupied chiefly in overseeing that branch of the industry, so I was obliged to employ an agent to make the trips abroad. One bitter cold, stormy day, about the first of February, there was nothing doing; no farmers in town, and I was tired of sitting around the stove. I put on my overcoat, and said to Mr. Prettyman, "I will go out and try to buy what wheat there is in town."

I first called on Charles Lesslie, at the corner of Front and Brady streets. He had a small warehouse full of very choice wheat, most of it raised by the Brownlies, at Long Grove, who at that time were considered the best farmers in the county. After considerable talk I bought him out. I agreed to pay him sixty cents a bushel, to take the wheat away any time I pleased between then and the first of May, and to pay for it when removed. There were about twenty-five hundred bushels.

I then called on William Inslee and bought about the same amount from him, paying the same price. Whisler then occupied the lot at the corner of Front and Main streets and had a large warehouse nearly full of wheat. I bought him out also at the same price of sixty cents a bushel.

This closed out all the wheat in town. I went back to the store well satisfied with my forenoon's work. As I afterwards sold this wheat for double what I paid for it, we made about five thousand dollars in the operation. All the expense I had was to sack the wheat and deliver it to the boat: the buyer furnished the sacks.

We found, at the opening of navigation, that we had on hand a larger supply of breadstuffs than any other dealer on the river. The profit on flour which had been made in the fall and held over and on wheat which had been bought in the early part of the winter for thirty cents a bushel, was simply enormous. Flour that cost us two dollars a barrel sold for seven



dollars. In the spring we put our stuff on the market as rapidly as possible. By July 1st we had paid every dollar we owed and had money to our credit with which we proposed to put up a flouring mill in Davenport. The town thus far had neither a flour mill nor a sawmill. We intended to give her both.

The Crimean War began in the fall of 1853 and in March, 1854, France and England formed an alliance with Turkey and declared war on Russia. I had been watching the markets and the foreign news. Most people thought the war would all end in smoke, but I believed Russia would fight. Others thought the war would not affect our markets, but I thought it would, as Russia exported a large quantity of wheat, especially from the port of Sebastopol. When that port was blockaded I believed there would be a sharp advance in breadstuffs.

I was in New York during the early part of July, and visited my old friend, James E. Woodruff. I had many talks with him about the prospect of the business season about to open. At that time breadstuff markets were very much depressed, both in the East and the West.

Woodruff asked me what I was going to pay for wheat. I told him fifty cents a bushel. He said, "I don't know what you are going to do with it at that price. There is not a market in the world that you can ship wheat to where it will net you more than forty cents a bushel. You ought not to pay to exceed forty cents. You are too good to the farmers. You

pay too much for produce. You always pay higher prices than any of our customers. You work harder, for less money, than any man I ever knew."

"Well," said I, "we are going to have a heavy crop of wheat, and I have doubled the capacity of my mill. Our farmers will not sell wheat freely at less than fifty cents a bushel. Burrows & Prettyman have a large amount standing out which they must get in, and it will require fifty cents a bushel to make collections. I have more faith in the future than you have. I intend to ship everything to New York — all my flour and surplus wheat — and don't care how long it is on the way; the longer the better, because I am satisfied the prices are going to be much higher."

I returned home. On my way I stopped one day in Chicago to see how the markets were. T. J. S. Flint and C. T. Wheeler were the strongest and heaviest grain men in Chicago then, and had the largest elevator in the city. They took me on 'Change and showed me various samples of new winter wheat, which was just beginning to come in from southern Illinois and which was selling that day at sixty cents a bushel. I had a long talk with them about the fall business. They coincided with Woodruff that forty cents was a generous price, and all I ought to pay.

Our railroad, the Chicago & Rock Island, had just been opened and freight was very high, being about twenty cents a bushel for wheat from Davenport to

Chicago. The expense of handling the grain in Chicago would amount to about two cents a bushel more.

Fifty cents a bushel for spring wheat in Davenport, with twenty-two cents added for freight and expenses in Chicago making the price seventy-two cents a bushel, when the best of fall wheat was actually selling at sixty cents, did look somewhat venturesome. But in my whole experience I never felt so sure of a season's business as I did then. My friends thought I would ruin myself.

Such a crop of wheat Scott County never produced before or since. Farmers were beginning to harvest. Our land was new and in condition to produce its very best. Club wheat had recently been introduced and nearly all the growing crop was of that variety. It stood thick and even on the ground, nearly five feet high, and well headed. For six inches below the head the straw was as yellow as gold.

Wheat ran, that year, from thirty to forty bushels to the acre. What was more remarkable, the quality of the wheat was all number one. You could not get an inferior quality, even if you paid a premium for it. This extraordinary crop made me still more sanguine, and I felt in my very bones that this was the time to pitch in.

The heaviest dealers in produce in Davenport, besides myself, were J. R. Graham and G. W. Kepner. I told them I was going to control the wheat market of Davenport that fall and that I should keep the price of wheat about two cents above that paid by



dealers in Muscatine who, at that time, were our only competitors. I also told them that I intended to draw the wheat from Cedar and Linn counties away from Muscatine.

To Graham & Kepner I made this proposition: "I will give you five cents a bushel for all the wheat you will buy between now and the first of next December. You shall put it in my mill, on the railroad cars, or on a steamboat, or wherever I shall instruct you. I will give you the price each morning which you are to pay that day. You shall pay just what I pay. I will never bid against you. You will furnish your own money. I want your bills of lading and vouchers every Saturday; you are to bring in your bill every Monday morning and I will pay you."

Graham & Kepner accepted my proposition. I used to pay them from ten to twenty thousand dollars every Monday morning. Mr. Graham has told me since that they never did as well any season as they did under this arrangement with me.

I had all of this wheat put into cars for shipment to New York. Arrangements were made with the railroad company to place cars where the farmers could get at them and unload their wheat into the car, thus saving a second handling and the additional expense.

Flint & Wheeler agreed to receive and forward my shipments in Chicago. I told them I expected to be able to load a vessel every week, and that I did not want my wheat inspected. All I wanted was to have

them receive the flour and wheat from day to day as it arrived, hold it until they had enough to load a vessel, and then consign it to Woodruff in New York.

It took but a short time to show that I was in luck. Sebastopol was invested. Breadstuffs advanced in Europe. Russia's ports were blockaded: her grain was locked up. The first of my fifty-cent wheat brought two dollars and twenty-five cents a bushel in New York. I made more than one hundred thousand dollars between the first of August and the first of December. Most of the money was made the first sixty days when wheat was low. I began buying at fifty cents and in October I was paying a dollar and forty cents a bushel. At the latter price only ordinary profits were made.

Everything seemed to favor me that fall. One propeller, loaded entirely with my wheat and flour, exploded on the lake and sank, the whole cargo being lost. Yet I made four thousand dollars by it: the cargo was insured in New York City and I saved the freight from Davenport to New York.

For over a year I did a fairly good business. Then came a dreadful blow. First, the news of the death of Nicholas, Czar of Russia; then a few months later, the fall of Sebastopol. Everyone knew the war was at an end. Prices of produce fell instantly all over the United States — wheat from fifty to sixty cents a bushel; flour, three dollars a barrel; and everything else in proportion. The decline continued day after day. I went to bed on the night the news ar-

rived two hundred thousand dollars poorer than I had arisen the same morning. I had on the market six thousand barrels of flour, and in Davenport one hundred and fifty thousand bushels of wheat and all my winter's packing, not a dollar's worth of which had been sold.

That drop in prices was an overwhelming catastrophe. It broke up nearly every dealer on the Mississippi River, and was really what finally broke Burrows & Prettyman.

J. M. D. BURROWS



## Comment by the Editor

### THE MATERIALS OF HISTORY

Historians who delve into the prehistoric find few materials and only scattered records. They view a limestone cliff, and tell of the time when Iowa was under the sea; they reconstruct a race of men from fragmentary skulls and thigh bones; they visit the Valley of the Kings, and vitalize the reign of Tutankhamen from an inspection of his tomb. They deal with symbols, as all historians should.

The annalist of the present age has a different problem, for records of modern life are without number. The harmony of events, like the organization of matter, defies understanding and yet compels contemplation. To produce cosmos from chaos is the alchemy of modern history.

He who undertakes to review all events, to read all accounts, to discover all causes, and to perceive all effects, in order that he may produce a complete and truthful image of the times, attempts the impossible. Selection is his task. It is for the historian to choose significant facts, to interpret the symbolism of events, to dwell upon typical characters, to write literature—in short, to be an artist as well as a scholar.

Abundance of material has its advantages. Think of the newspapers. What an infinite variety of sub-

jects they cover. With what detail events are described, and how rich is the comment.

Consider the service of photography. The eye of the camera sees all and never forgets. It beggars all language in the realm of description. The most trivial snapshot may be of great value, while the utility of an aërial view of a battle or city is beyond calculation. As for the movies, they verily challenge mortality. Death has lost its meaning to history; for those who are dead still live and move and have their being.

Even sound can now be preserved. The past may be heard as well as seen. He who runs need not read: he may simply look and listen.

J. E. B.



The

# PALIMPSEST

MARCH 1923

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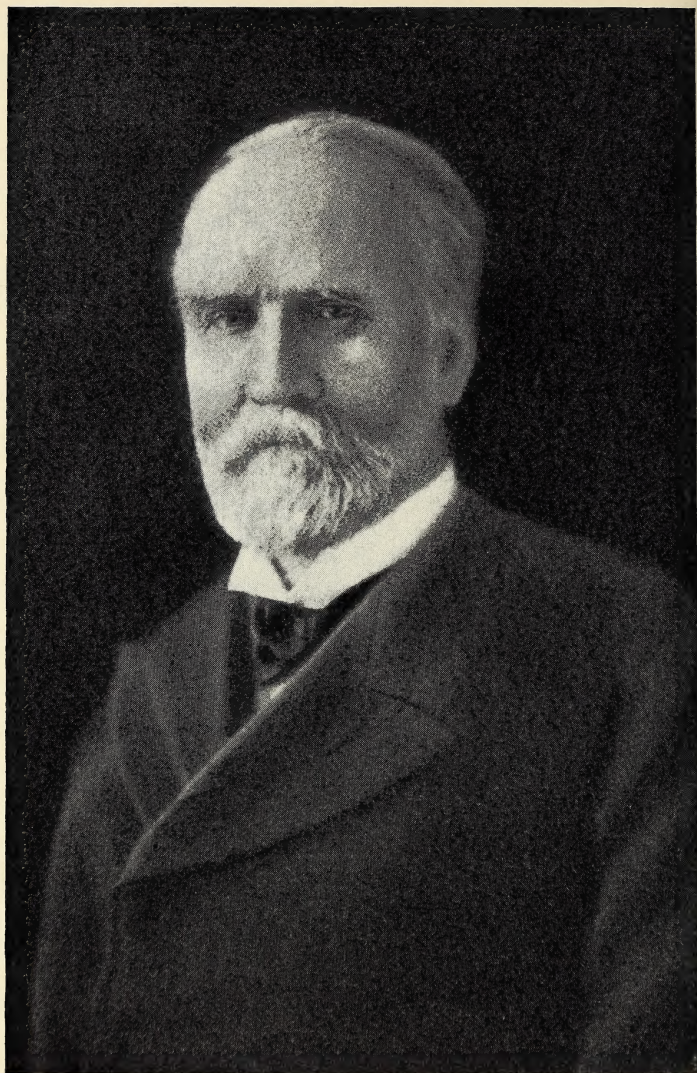
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THE EDITOR

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JAMES WILSON

# THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY JOHN ELY BRIGGS

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## A Man of Vision

James Wilson was a man of vision. Keen perception and singleness of purpose were his dominant characteristics. His simplicity of life and his broad love for humanity furnish the key to an understanding of his career. There are few heights of imagination or emotion to record, and no remarkable victories to analyze. Throughout his life, from early boyhood until the close of his long official career, influences and events contributed steadily, logically, and undramatically to the formulation and accomplishment of his self-imposed mission.

As James Wilson grew into manhood and assumed family responsibilities, the hardships, the social inferiority, and the unhappiness of the American farmer were borne in upon his consciousness with vivid and personal reality. When he analyzed these conditions, he found their origin in economic causes, and the solution, he concluded, lay in the application



of science. By increasing the yield of produce per acre, by improving the methods of stock raising, by developing facilities for transportation, and by finding new markets, the farmers' income would be increased and this, in turn, would break the dull routine of the farm life, raise the standard of living, and create a new rural order. So confident of these conclusions was Mr. Wilson that their accomplishment became the motivating factor of his life, the vision of his service to humanity.

A chronology of James Wilson's life is indicative of steady progress. Born on a farm in Ayrshire, Scotland, in 1835, he grew up under the rigid and careful discipline of a Scotch home. In 1851 the family moved to the United States in order to improve their financial position. After remaining in Connecticut for about four years they joined the Scotch settlement on Wolf Creek, in Tama County, Iowa, near the present town of Traer. For a number of years James worked either on his father's farm or that of his uncle, West Wilson. Just before the outbreak of the Civil War, James and his brother, Peter, began farming for themselves. In 1867 James was elected to the General Assembly where he served three terms — the last as Speaker of the House of Representatives.

His next advancement came in 1872 when he was elected to Congress. Here again he served three terms, though not successively. For a number of years he edited the Traer *Star-Clipper* in which his



articles on farming attracted much attention. Then he became professor of agriculture and director of the agricultural experiment station in the State College of Agriculture at Ames. His highest recognition came in 1897 when President McKinley appointed him Secretary of the Department of Agriculture.

Nature and heredity smiled on James Wilson in a generous fashion, giving him two significant attributes: an efficient mind and a kindly temperament that found its satisfaction in a wholesome love for humanity. His father, John Wilson, a middle-class farmer, was a man of intelligence and practical imagination. James inherited both qualities, with the result that a close bond of mutual respect was established between the father and son. John Wilson spared neither time nor effort in teaching his son, and the boy proved to be an apt pupil. When the Wilsons came to Connecticut in 1851, James, then sixteen years of age, had already acquired the rudiments of scientific agriculture.

If the boy received from his father a thoughtful bent, he acquired from his mother a sweetness of character, an appreciation of the aesthetic, and a conception of family life that was to serve as his ideal and aspiration ever afterward. The gentle Jean McCosh gave of her best to her son and he returned a devotion so exalted that it made all womankind the object of his courtesy and his consideration. It was a characteristic that sometimes

contrasted oddly with the rude, hearty freedom of the men and women of pioneer American society.

To his sisters James Wilson was always a hero. He could slide the farthest, throw the straightest, and "he knew everything." Later he became the kindest teacher, the strongest protector, and the truest friend. When he entered upon his official career they followed every step in his progress with an enthusiasm and encouragement that admitted no possibility of failure. As an old man he came back to them and they ministered to his last wants, giving the comforts that only their thoughtfulness could provide.

James Wilson seems to have enjoyed better educational opportunities than might be expected. Eager to learn, he was given ample time and means for study, though the rigor of Scottish discipline left little time for play. He was able to read at an early age and soon exhibited a fondness for history and literature. Macaulay's "History of England" was a favorite. It is said that he could tell any story that Scott ever wrote and that he was almost as familiar with Burns. The fundamentals of Latin were acquired under the tutelage of John Ross. Raised in a strict Presbyterian home, he naturally became a student of the Bible, from which he was able to quote freely and much to the point.

An illuminating anecdote is told in this connection. During McKinley's administration at the close of stormy cabinet meetings the President was accus-

tomed to turn to his Secretary of Agriculture with the question, "Now, Mr. Wilson, what's the scripture on that?" and Mr. Wilson was ever ready with a pertinent passage — not always from the Bible. In Roosevelt's cabinet, however, the tables were turned and the President did his own quoting, often from sources unknown to Wilson.

Rural life on the Iowa prairie afforded neither the incentive nor the opportunity for classical training, and the young Scotchman entered upon a new phase of his education that savored of the soil and the needs of a new country. Three winters spent in the public schools — two as a student and one as a teacher — revealed in a concrete manner both the paucity of the rural schools and the imperative need for further school legislation. One year of work in Grinnell College seems to have convinced him of the inability of the private and denominational colleges to provide the secondary and technical education for an agricultural population.

Henceforth his principal subject of study was people: the farms of Iowa were his laboratory. Although a number of American colleges and universities awarded him the honorary degree of doctor of laws, he never received an academic degree. His mind, however, trained in methods of study was directed toward the analysis of a practical problem — the improvement of conditions for the Iowa farmer.

James Wilson and his brother Peter had scarcely



begun farming for themselves in 1861 when the Civil War commenced, and it became a matter of patriotic duty for one of them to join the army. After considerable thought a plan was formed. Peter, who was the stronger, agreed to enlist: James was to remain at home, take care of the farm, and divide the profits with Peter when he returned. The scheme worked well, for Peter returned with a commission and the farm had doubled in size and was stocked with all the horses, cattle, and hogs it could support.

During these early years of farming, James Wilson experimented with a theory that has since been generally accepted throughout Iowa as a fundamental of scientific farming. All the fodder, grain, and hay that was raised on the farm, he thought, should be fed to live stock and converted into meat and dairy products. While this practice had many obvious advantages, it also produced a series of other problems. As perceived by Mr. Wilson, these included the development of a satisfactory market for butter, cheese, and meat; improved standards of stock breeding; and the eradication of animal diseases.

The advent of Mr. Wilson into politics was a direct outgrowth of his agricultural efficiency. He could raise good crops and good stock. He was honest, and he inspired the respect of his neighbors. It was a mark of their esteem that he was elected to the county board of supervisors in 1864.

Three years later his constituency had widened and he was sent to the State legislature as the Representative from Tama County. His first election in 1867 came in the midst of the corn husking season when there was very little time to prepare for his legislative duties. He was determined, however, to become proficient in parliamentary procedure. For that purpose he fastened a manual of parliamentary law on the end gate and studied the rules while he husked the down-row behind the wagon.

Three terms Mr. Wilson served in the General Assembly, the last as Speaker of the House. It was asserted that he was "the man in whose hand the gavel of the House has for the first time in the history of the State been placed by the cordial consent of all the members of his own party". Railroad regulation, prohibition, suffrage, and revision of the fence laws were the dominant issues. In the enactment of legislation on these subjects, Mr. Wilson took a prominent part and acquitted himself creditably. His experience in the Iowa legislature was a valuable asset when his public service took him to Congress in the years that followed.

When he became professor of agriculture at Ames, he was obliged to expand his field of vision. His active farming came to an end, and he turned his attention to the scientific analysis of the problems of agriculture in general, but particularly in Iowa. Six years he spent in quiet, intensive study.

National recognition came to James Wilson in

1897, when President McKinley called him to serve as Secretary of Agriculture. The honor meant much, but better than that the position gave him the opportunity of utilizing the resources of the whole nation to inaugurate the broad program of education in behalf of the American farmer that he had been formulating throughout almost half a century. Henceforth his service was national in scope.

He entered upon his new task with enthusiasm. The College of Agriculture granted him an indefinite leave of absence, and from that time, except for occasional trips to Iowa where he retained official residence, Washington was his permanent home and the United States his field of thought and responsibility.

One bond of duty always attached him to Iowa. He believed that every man should exercise his privilege of voting, so he made it a rule to return at election time. Often he aided his party in political campaigns, sometimes speaking in districts that others feared to enter. It was his habit, however, to deliver his last speech in a campaign to his home constituency — a custom pleasing to himself as well as his friends.

Mr. Wilson stated his attitude toward the work of the Department of Agriculture very clearly in his first annual report. The Department was organized, he said, "to help farmers to a better knowledge of production and its tendencies at home and abroad, so as to enable them to intelligently meet the re-



quirements of home and foreign markets for material that may be profitably grown or manufactured on American farms." It was also intended that the Department should organize a comprehensive system of teaching agricultural science to farmers. The three agencies through which Secretary Wilson hoped to obtain these results were the State agricultural colleges, the experiment stations, and a corps of competent research scientists in the Department of Agriculture.

It was through the latter that he expected to accomplish the most practical and far-reaching results. They were to be his personal assistants, appointed to do specific tasks, and held responsible for the successful execution of their assignments. He planned to secure these workers from the agricultural colleges which were turning out every year scores of intelligent and ambitious young graduates who desired further opportunity for study and research. Congress, he proposed, should make appropriations that would attract the most promising of them into government work. Well equipped laboratories at Washington were to be the center of this activity, but the men were also to be sent wherever else they might be needed.

Secretary Wilson was well qualified to make this policy effective. He was a good judge of men and he insisted upon the same standards of energy and efficiency among his assistants that he maintained for himself. In scientific fields in which he, himself,

was not an expert he employed specialists, thus extending the scope of research work to any subject that seemed to need attention. Both the research assistant and the trained scientist, he thought, should be adequately paid: the former a living wage and the latter a salary sufficient to prevent him from accepting inducements outside of government service.

The magnitude of the task Secretary Wilson undertook and the energy with which he proceeded to its accomplishment may be indicated by a few special problems. Early in 1897 it became apparent that there would be a surplus of butter on the American market. By midsummer the price of the best creamery butter had fallen to fifteen cents a pound. If this condition continued dairying would decrease and the farmers would sell instead of feed their grain and provender—a policy which Mr. Wilson had discouraged for many years. In this contingency the Department of Agriculture made a number of experimental exports of butter for the purpose of creating a foreign demand and securing exact information concerning the opportunities afforded. The butter was obtained from leading dairy States, prepared with special reference to the demands of foreign trade, and consigned to a representative of the Department at London who disposed of it himself. He attempted to ascertain the candid opinion of each buyer as to the quality of the butter. Agents of the Department followed the

transportation of the butter in an effort to avoid delays, provide refrigeration, and prevent careless handling. These experiments demonstrated that American butter could be delivered in prime condition to British consumers within fifteen or twenty days from the time it was made, that the only absolutely pure butter imported into Great Britain came from the United States and Denmark, and that the price of butter in America could be increased over fifty per cent in a few months.

Another problem of an entirely different nature attracted Mr. Wilson's attention. Enormous sums of money were being lost each year because farmers had no authoritative means of forecasting weather conditions. This was true in the grain States, but more particularly in the fruit regions of the Far West. Daily weather reports were telegraphed to thousands of towns and broadcast to surrounding farms over rural telephones.

A number of corollary functions developed from the daily weather service. Mr. Wilson conceived the idea of sending out weekly climate and crop reports to all parts of the country. This data enabled the farmer to judge future market conditions, it indicated the type of product best suited to a particular locality, and it suggested the adaptation of new products to fit peculiar conditions of soil and climate. Losses from storms and floods were curtailed by means of special reports based on daily temperature and rain-gauge readings from all parts



of the country. Specialists were able to predict river floods with astonishing accuracy, while advance reports of storms made it possible for lake vessels to seek safety in time.

In the biological field Secretary Wilson was especially interested in the study of the geographical distribution of plants and animals with a view to locating the boundaries of their natural habitat, the study of the food habits of birds and mammals to ascertain the economic relations of native species, the eradication of insect pests by the development of parasites, and the prevention of disease among domestic animals.

By means of chemical analysis of soil and the comparison of American soils with those of other countries, the Secretary determined what grains and grasses could be successfully introduced. He wanted to secure products that would withstand the alkali and drouth of the West, that would rejuvenate the worn-out soil of the East, and that were adapted to the cheap land of the South. The object was to substitute superior foreign grasses, grains, and fruits for inferior native varieties.

Nor was Mr. Wilson unmindful of the needs of women on the farm. Under his direction some educational work was begun in dietetics, methods of cooking, and food values. On this subject let him speak for himself: "In the great work of helping the women of our land, nearly half of whom are toiling in the homes upon our farms, this Depart-

ment, it is believed, has a large duty to perform. For, whatever will be effective in raising the grade of the home life on the farm, in securing the better nourishment of the farmer's family, and in surrounding them with the refinements and attractions of a well-ordered home, will powerfully contribute alike to the material prosperity of the country and the general welfare of the farmers." Later he carried the idea much farther when he expressed the wish that the Department might extend its assistance to those "who are engaged in the noble task of giving practical training to the future wives and mothers of our farmers and to the vast army of faithful women who are bearing the heavy burdens of keeping the farmers' homes pure and sweet and rearing the future masters of our vast agricultural domain."

James Wilson was Secretary of Agriculture for sixteen years — serving through the administrations of Presidents McKinley, Roosevelt, and Taft. He was a member of the cabinet longer than any other man in the history of the United States. His achievements were amazing. He began with a great purpose and remained to witness the fulfillment of his vision. His final report closes with this sentence: "Men grow old in service and in years, and cease their labor, but the results of their labor and the children of their brains will live on; and may whatever of worth that is in these be everblooming."

BERTHA ANN REUTER

## A Contested Election

The first unofficial returns from the Congressional election in the fifth district of Iowa in November, 1882, were discouraging to the Republicans. Benjamin T. Frederick, a Democrat, had apparently been elected to Congress by the very narrow margin of sixteen votes. A more astonishing feature of the election was the defeat of the Republican candidate, James Wilson. "Tama Jim", as he was commonly called, was almost universally respected and admired, while his Democratic opponent was unpopular even among members of that party. "So near and yet so far", sighed a Republican editor, and then proceeded to upbraid the rank and file of his party for their apparent indifference and neglect.

A few days later the clouds of Republican gloom were dispelled by corrected election returns which gave James Wilson a plurality of twenty-five votes. The original count, it was reported, had not included the votes cast in Taylor Township of Marshall County, which had been disregarded by the county board of supervisors because one of the judges had not signed the poll books. Afterward, however, a law was discovered which authorized a majority of the judges of election to act for the entire body. Thereupon the supervisors certified the Taylor Township votes to the State Board of Canvassers,



and the Republican candidate was accordingly declared elected.

But Mr. Frederick was not to be disposed of so readily. He decided to spare no pains in an effort to prevent the certificate of election being issued to Mr. Wilson. Failing in that he would carry his contest to the House of Representatives. Since a majority of the Representatives in the Forty-eighth Congress were Democrats he anticipated that his claim to a seat would be approved.

Early in December, 1882, a hearing was held before the State Executive Council. Both Mr. Wilson and Mr. Frederick were present: the former was represented by J. H. Bradley of Marshalltown, while Timothy O. Brown and B. F. Kaufman served as counsel for the latter. On behalf of Mr. Frederick it was urged that the State Board of Canvassers had no judicial power over election returns, but merely the administrative function of making official acceptance. The second certificate sent by the Marshall County board of supervisors, Mr. Brown maintained, was not an election return, but simply a statement of what the board had done, and therefore the State canvassers had no right to consider it. To support this position a Supreme Court decision was cited which held that if an election board had once completed its count and signed the returns it could not make a recount—though it was admitted that this decision applied only to township or precinct canvassers.

Mr. Bradley, on the other hand, pointed out that according to law the county board of supervisors of Marshall County had erred in throwing out the votes from Taylor Township. He claimed that the supervisors, acting as the board of canvassers, were engaged in the performance of a ministerial duty and should not have judged upon the validity of the poll books. The names of the election judges appeared thereon and the fact that a clerk had signed for one of the judges did not alter the case. Moreover, the law plainly stated that the action of a majority of the election judges was sufficient. He too supported his contentions with citations from decisions which had been rendered by State and Federal courts, and requested that the certificate of election be issued on the basis of the corrected returns from Marshall County.

The Executive Council appears to have taken no decisive action immediately after the hearing and Mr. Frederick's next move was to apply to the district court of Polk County for a writ of injunction forbidding a count of the votes from Taylor Township. The writ was issued by Judge William H. McHenry but in spite of this action a certificate of election was given to Mr. Wilson. "It remains for Mr. Frederick", said a Democratic editor, "to carry his case to a higher tribunal where justice and non-partisanship will obtain in determining the legal right."

Accordingly the dispute was carried to the Forty-



eight Congress in December of 1883. The papers relating to the contest were formally presented to the House of Representatives on January 10, 1884, and were referred to the committee on elections. No report concerning the contest appears to have been made during the first session of the Forty-eighth Congress, but on February 19, 1885, only thirteen days before the end of that Congress, Riden Bennett, a Representative from North Carolina, reported on behalf of the Democratic majority of the committee on elections that in its opinion James Wilson had not been elected from the Fifth Congressional District of Iowa, that he was therefore not entitled to a seat in the House, and that Benjamin T. Frederick should be seated. Mr. Bennett also served notice that he would call up the report for consideration at an early date. Upon the request of Edward K. Valentine, a Representative from Nebraska, leave to file a report containing the views of the minority of the committee on elections was granted, and four days later, on February 23rd, this report was submitted by Samuel H. Miller, a Representative from Pennsylvania.

The reports of the committee on elections indicate that the issues of the contest were no longer based upon the returns from Taylor Township in Marshall County, but upon irregularities in many precincts throughout the district. Indeed, the majority of the committee graciously admitted the returns from Taylor Township in spite of the fact that, according



to their contentions, these votes had been irregularly certified to the State authorities and in spite of the contention that the counting of these votes had actually been commenced before the polls were closed.

Most of the circumstances in dispute related to the general recount of Congressional election votes which had been made. According to this second count, the supporters of Mr. Frederick claimed that their candidate had been elected by a plurality of twenty-three votes.

Mr. Wilson's proponents objected to giving the seat to the Democratic candidate on the results of "pretended recounts" because hired agents of Mr. Frederick had tampered with the ballots and had opened ballot boxes and counted votes without the knowledge of Mr. Wilson or his agents. One agent for Mr. Frederick admitted that he had been employed for about twenty-one days "laying the foundation" for the contest, and had visited about thirty precincts in which the ballot boxes had been opened. He insisted, however, that he did not change any of the ballots but merely "touched them with the rubber end of his pencil". A ballot box in Tama was alleged to have been forcibly opened with a hatchet by the chairman of the local Democratic party committee prior to the recount. In Marshalltown the ballots were said to have been dumped into a large paper box which was kept in the rear office room of some local business men, a room which was open to the public generally and especially to Frederick and

his friends who frequently met there to play cards.

The majority report dwelt upon irregularities claimed to have been practiced at the election by the supporters of Mr. Wilson. The election returns from Homer Township in Benton County showed that sixty-six votes had been cast for Wilson and only thirty-five for Frederick, while the vote for other candidates on party lines was almost exactly the reverse. Later, forty-two electors declared under oath that they had meant to vote for Mr. Frederick. It was claimed that a Republican had supplied some of the German voters with ballots labeled "Democratic" and bearing the name of James Wilson as a candidate for Congress, and had led them to believe that by casting these ballots they would be voting for the Democratic candidate, Frederick.

The contest was not brought before the House until the second day of March. Only two more days and the final session of the Forty-eighth Congress would come to an end. If Mr. Wilson's friends could prevent the resolution to seat his opponent from coming to a vote he would be able to complete his term without the stigma of the charge of having usurped the position. To attain this end the minority resorted to every parliamentary means at their disposal. The fact that the resolution was a privileged measure limited the resources for filibustering, so that the Wilson adherents were confined to the use of objections to consideration, roll calls, motions



for recesses with amendments thereto, calls of the House to determine the presence of a quorum, adjournments, and other motions of high privilege. These tactics were employed most effectively, however, and the resolution was submerged until in the closing hours of the session when some much desired legislation was tied up by the filibuster.

All through the night of March 3rd the House remained in session, striving frantically to finish the work before the hour of final adjournment. The inauguration of President Cleveland was only a few hours away. The city of Washington thronged with visitors. Early in the forenoon of March 4th spectators filled the House and Senate galleries to witness the closing scenes of the Forty-eighth Congress. Former soldiers were present in large numbers, attracted chiefly by their interest in a bill authorizing the President to place upon the retired list one person from among the former generals of the United States armies with the rank and pay of a general. The measure was designed for the relief of General Grant, then mortally ill and devoid of means of support.

On the floor of the House many Representatives sought to obtain favorable action on the bill, which had already passed the Senate. The idea had won popular approval, and was supported by a substantial majority in the House of Representatives, chiefly Republicans and Democrats from the North.

A serious obstacle stood in the way. Directly pre-



ceding the Grant bill in the order of business was the Frederick-Wilson election contest. The pension bill might have been acted upon under a suspension of the rules when it was called up, with the election contest still pending, but Mr. Bennett had objected and so long as the objection was maintained the Grant bill could not be acted upon until after the disposal of all other privileged motions. It was therefore imperative that the contested election be decided before the measure for the relief of General Grant could be passed.

Mr. Wilson's friends found themselves in a dilemma. They knew full well that if they allowed a vote upon the election contest Wilson would be deprived of his seat. Fully capable of continuing the filibuster to the end, they were in no mood to desert their colleague during the closing hours of the Congress. Even if they should allow the election contest to be decided their opponents might afterward refuse to act upon the Grant bill. Moreover, they had no positive assurance that the Grant bill would pass if it was permitted to come to a vote. Yet to continue the filibuster would be absolutely fatal to the measure providing comfort for a former President and expressing a nation's gratitude to one who had contributed largely to the preservation of the Union — a measure which they earnestly desired to have enacted into law. What should they do?

The position of Wilson's opponents was much less difficult. While many of them were willing to vote

relief to General Grant they felt no particular obligation in the matter. For the most part they would have been quite satisfied to let the measure die. There were even a few bitter Southern Democrats who seized upon the election contest as a weapon to defeat the cherished plan of Northern men to pension their most successful leader in the Civil War.

The forenoon of March 4th slipped away. As Joshua commanded the sun and moon to stand still in order that the victory of God's people over their enemies might be more complete, so now the clocks of Congress were turned back that this battle of parliamentary wits might continue. In the Vice President's room Grover Cleveland awaited the inaugural ceremony, while President Arthur was busy in his office at the Capitol signing the last acts of the Congress.

In the House of Representatives members were clamoring for recognition. Their eagerness to be heard only lessened the possibilities of concluding the business. In the midst of this tumult was James Wilson — vitally interested in the outcome and technically disqualified from participating in the contest, yet he alone was in a position to make the decision.

It was not the first time that the balance of power in Congress had rested in the hands of an Iowan. Only a few years before Senator James W. Grimes, though he was seriously ill at the time, had gone to the Senate chamber and cast the vote that prevented Andrew Johnson from being removed from the office



of President of the United States. Though he sacrificed his political future, time has vindicated that vote. Would James Wilson exhibit similar unselfishness in order that the United States might render a token of gratitude to General Grant?

A few more minutes of filibustering and the Forty-eighth Congress would end. If the records were to show that James Wilson had represented the Fifth Congressional District of Iowa from 1883 to 1885, it would be at the sacrifice of the pension for the sick and needy ex-President and commander of the Union armies. If the pension was to be granted, it would mean that the election contest would first be decided against Wilson and the records would seem to indicate that James Wilson had fraudulently held his seat until the closing hours of the last session. Mr. Wilson could not have been unmindful of these considerations, as he decided upon his course of action.

Confusion in the House had reached its highest pitch. Time and again the Speaker had reminded the Representatives of the impossibility of conducting business unless quiet and decorum prevailed. The sergeant-at-arms had been directed to maintain order and to cause the members to resume their seats. It had even become necessary for the deputy sergeant-at-arms to proceed through the hall bearing the mace.

During these attempts to restore order Mr. Bennett demanded a vote upon the resolution ousting Mr. Wilson from membership in the House of Repre-



sentatives. As for himself he promised to withdraw his objection to the pension bill if the minority would permit a decision of the contested election. "I do not say more", he added. "I do not keep the consciences of members. God Almighty has made the human mind free, and gentlemen can vote as they please." These remarks elicited laughter and during the tumult that followed Mr. Wilson sought to address the House. His efforts to attract the attention of the Speaker proved to be of no avail, however. At length Thomas A. Robertson from Kentucky, a Democratic member of the committee on elections, informed the Speaker that the gentleman from Iowa desired to make a statement and requested that he be recognized.

At once the chamber became strangely quiet, and every ear was strained to hear the words of the man in whose hands lay the balance of power. "Mr. Speaker," he said, "if the House will vote to put General Grant on the retired list I am willing to be sacrificed after that."

Loud applause greeted this announcement, but Mr. Bennett was uncompromising. He persisted in demanding a vote on the contested election resolution before any other business should be transacted. Samuel H. Miller, a Republican member of the committee on elections, who had led the filibuster to keep the contested election case from coming to a vote, stated that if a vote on the Grant bill were taken immediately he would withdraw all objection to de-

ciding the contested election afterward. When his proposal was met with cries of "Oh no!" he finally offered to allow a vote upon the contested election resolution first. He hoped that the House would act fairly upon both measures.

Again Mr. Bennett reiterated his demand that the Speaker put the previous question, and after one more short parliamentary skirmish the House proceeded to vote upon the resolution, "That James Wilson was not elected as a Representative in Congress from the fifth district of Iowa, and is not entitled to a seat on the floor of this House", and further, "That Benjamin T. Frederick was duly elected as a Representative in Congress from the fifth district of Iowa, and is entitled to be sworn in as a member of this House." The result was true to expectations: James Wilson lost his seat, and Benjamin T. Frederick, presenting himself at the bar of the House, took the oath of office.

A few minutes later, when the Grant bill passed the House, Mr. Frederick voted "Yea", as James Wilson would have done. And thus it happened that General Grant's last days were filled with contentment because an Iowa Congressman surrendered his seat in the House of Representatives.

JACOB VAN EK

## Legislative Episodes

While James Wilson was a member of the Iowa General Assembly he was chiefly responsible for two epoch-making pieces of legislation: railroad regulation and the "herd law". Back of both enactments was the single idea of the protection of Iowa farmers. In laying the foundation for governmental rate fixing Mr. Wilson anticipated the not far-distant day when the interests of shippers and carriers would clash. The "herd law" was the political acknowledgment of the transition of Iowa from prairie to field, with all the fundamental changes that implied.

Prior to 1868 the policy of both State and Federal legislatures had been to stimulate railroad construction by every means within their power. Millions of acres of the best land in Iowa were donated to the cause; townships, counties, and cities were authorized to tax themselves heavily in aid of new railroads; and railroad companies were granted the power of eminent domain. Individuals contributed money with courageous optimism, while gifts of rights of way and depot sites were common. Every inducement was extended to railroad builders to multiply the tracks of the iron horse. No doubt the public paid far more toward the construction of the first railroads in Iowa than the stockholders did.



In spite of all this encouragement the westward progress of the railroads was slow and uncertain. The people clamored for the fulfillment of promises long deferred. There was little thought of restrictive regulation, present or future: the cry was for railroads — railroads at any price. Governor William M. Stone, in his annual message to the Twelfth General Assembly, declared that while some of the railroad companies which had received land grants had failed to comply with the conditions stipulated the legislature would be “justified in the exercise of still farther leniency toward them.” Any legislation, he thought, “tending to their discouragement should be avoided”.

To the Twelfth General Assembly fell the task of dealing with the delinquent land grant railroads. Several bills were introduced in the House of Representatives and referred to the committee on railroads, of which James Wilson was a member. A farmer himself and the representative of a rural community, he naturally favored legislation fostering the new railroads. But he was not as willing to mortgage the future as some of his colleagues. Perhaps the construction of the Iowa Central Air Line (the Chicago and Northwestern route) through the southern part of Tama County in 1862 and the presence of the road from Dubuque to Iowa Falls fifteen or twenty miles north of his county had some bearing upon his attitude. His inherent antipathy to any action that might prove detrimental to the inter-

ests of agriculture was also a decisive factor in determining his position.

The first measure reported to the House by the committee on railroads was a bill "providing for and requiring the early construction of the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad". The majority of the committee were opposed to any provision which might detract from the inducements to build, but James Wilson and one other member refused to accept the majority opinion and submitted a minority report declaring that the bill ought not to pass without a proviso "reserving to the State of Iowa the right of regulating and restricting the freights and fares charged by said railroad company, when in the opinion of the General Assembly they may become oppressive."

For two whole days and parts of two more a hot debate was waged upon the floor of the House. There seemed to be no opposition to renewing the land grant of 1856 and legalizing the issuance of additional stock by the company, but many legislators, especially those from the counties through which the road was to be built, doubted the advisability of imposing any restrictions. Frederick Rector of Fremont County said he had become convinced that it was wrong to legislate against the railroads. It would be time to legislate upon the subject when there was any evidence that the influence or rates of the railroads had become destructive of the interests of the State.

Mr. Wilson maintained that there ought to be no fear that the General Assembly would impose upon the railroads — the opposite was more likely to be the case. There were men, he said, who would advise anything except guarding the interests of the people.

John Hayden of Jefferson County was opposed to enjoining restrictions upon the Rock Island Railroad that could not be placed upon other roads. To this Gibson Browne of Lee County replied that he realized how much the State was indebted to the railroads for its civilization, but he was none the less in favor of the amendment of the gentleman from Tama.

Other members were emphatic in expressing the same opinion. Man after man arose to say that he was not disposed to be unfair to the railroads, but felt that this was a golden moment. "We must assert our right to-day to regulate the charges upon this railroad or forever after remain quiet", declared L. F. Parker, professor of ancient languages in Grinnell College and Representative of Poweshiek County.

There were some, however, who still persisted in the notion that it was inexpedient if not unconstitutional for the State legislature to fix railroad rates, especially if such regulation was confined to the land grant railroads, and they attempted to delay further consideration. Mr. Wilson interposed with a motion to vote upon the question and his amend-



ment to make the Rock Island Railroad subject to rate regulation was adopted by a vote of fifty-four to twenty-nine. The bill as amended then passed the House without a single dissenting vote and the Senate concurred.

Other land grant bills were considered by the Twelfth General Assembly. In every instance the House committee on railroads proposed to postpone the issue of rate regulation, but just as invariably James Wilson made a minority report, sometimes supported by another member of the committee, sometimes alone. Although his amendments always met obstinate opposition they were adopted in every instance, and every land grant act since that time has contained a similar provision.

Thus, it was by virtue of the vision and independence of James Wilson that the State legislature of Iowa first asserted the power to regulate railroad rates in the interest of the public.

When the Thirteenth General Assembly was organized in 1870, James Wilson was appointed chairman of the House committee on agriculture. Of all the problems confronting the farmers of Iowa at that time he regarded the need of a herd law as the most important. The third measure introduced in the House that session was a bill by Mr. Wilson to "restrain stock from running at large." On February 7th the question came before the House and Mr. Wilson took the floor to present a "number of facts in support" of the measure.

Existing fence legislation, he said, "expresses the wants of the farmer in days that are past." The early settlers who located along the well-timbered streams had ready at hand the material to fence their farms and thus protect their crops from stock that was allowed to graze at large upon the uncultivated land. But the extension of the railroads and the high price of wheat had enticed the pioneers out upon the prairie, where the difficulties of fencing their fields constituted a serious problem.

There was not enough timber in the whole State of Iowa to fence its farms — as fences were then built. Already the scarcity of fence material was being felt in some sections. "The early settlers have cut down the fine groves that should have been left to relieve the monotony of the landscape, furnish a sanctuary for the birds and ameliorate the rigors of our climate", declared Mr. Wilson. "The supply of native timber will be completely exhausted in furnishing ties for railroads, material for bridges, and fence posts, before it can be replaced from artificial groves; while the birds, our only protection from insects, are by law invited to leave the State."

In Mr. Wilson's opinion it was imperative to relieve the prairie farmers of the exactions of the existing Iowa fence laws. The cost of fencing a prairie farm, he computed, amounted to more than the original price of the land. By the time a homesteader had built a house, bought some live stock, and purchased a few implements his means were

usually exhausted. To compel such a man to fence his farm was an unwarranted requirement, and yet a neighbor's cattle ought not to be allowed to destroy his crops with impunity.

The remedy, as he saw it, was to fence the pastures instead of the grain fields. Let every one take care of his own stock. At that time each Iowa farm maintained an average of about nine cattle. "Where is the necessity of fencing 160 acres of land for the privilege of keeping nine head of cattle?" he exclaimed. "An acre of land for each, seeded in clover and fenced, would keep them better than they are now kept." In the newly settled counties in the northwestern part of the State the farmers owned much less live stock than the average so that "the fencing of one section in a township, or one acre in thirty-six", was all that would be necessary.

"Perhaps more petitions have been presented for your consideration on this subject than ever were before sent upon any other, except the temperance question", said Mr. Wilson, in concluding his speech. "We do not ask a general law, although we believe the whole State would be benefitted; nor do I wish to take the responsibility of making final legislation for my county. We wish to submit it to a majority vote of any county desiring to act upon it, providing a way by which it can be repealed."

Debate on the bill was confined almost entirely to the procedure of assessing damages against the person whose stock trespassed upon another man's



property. As finally amended the measure passed the House by a vote of eighty to twelve, and was accepted by the Senate, though not without vigorous opposition of a few members.

The work of Mr. Wilson in the Twelfth and Thirteenth General Assemblies seems to have commended him strongly to his constituents. Not only had he insisted upon the right of the State to regulate railroad rates and secured a more equitable fence law in behalf of the farmers in the newly settled western part of the State, but he had steadfastly supported the temperance forces on the liquor question and had voted for an equal suffrage amendment to the Constitution — both of which were prominent issues of the day. At all events he was reëlected in 1871 for his third successive term in the General Assembly — one of five Representatives upon whom that honor was conferred that year.

The results of the election were no sooner announced than it was generally assumed that James Wilson would be chosen Speaker of the House. Shortly after the election Cicero Close announced his candidacy for the speakership but as public opinion became more and more favorable to Mr. Wilson he apparently gave up his aspirations to the office. "Tama Jim" was popular among his colleagues and his reputation for not being bitterly partisan made him acceptable to all factions. When the Republican House caucus met, James Wilson was unanimously selected as the party candidate

for Speaker — an honor bestowed “for the first time” in the history of Iowa. “Iowa has few men of more worth, none of a better manliness, none more thoroughly a representative of the people”, commented the *Des Moines Register*. “That Mr. Wilson will prove a popular presiding officer, his experience in legislative work, acquaintance with parliamentary law, promptness and decision of character, added to a dignified and courteous bearing, leave no doubt.”

Inasmuch as the House was overwhelming Republican, the actual election of Mr. Wilson was a mere formality. Having been conducted to the chair, he made a short speech in which he expressed his appreciation of the honor and concluded with the statement: “Regarding every member upon the floor as my personal friend, I will endeavor to discharge the duties of the chair with fairness, and in the spirit in which you placed me here.”

The Speaker had no sooner taken his seat than a colored waiter from the old Savery House was seen passing down the aisle, bearing a tray on which was a bottle of wine and a glass goblet. He stopped at Ed Campbell’s desk, whereupon the genial Democrat from Fairfield deliberately filled the goblet with wine and, after a fulsome greeting, drank a toast of good fellowship to the success of the Speaker, while the other members looked on in astonishment.

JOHN ELY BRIGGS

## Comment by the Editor

### BIOGRAPHY

Biography is history in the singular. Yet history, though it is based upon biography, is not the plural of it. Biography is perpendicular; while formal history is horizontal and cuts athwart the lives of men and women, destroying the continuity of their careers. Any chronicle of events deforms biography, for the character and deeds of people are distorted when displayed only in glimpses amidst distracting scenes upon a crowded stage. History is apt to make puppets of men to do the bidding of cause and effect.

In another sense biography may be conceived as the soil from which civilization has sprung. Since every human achievement has been rooted in the life of some man or woman, every idea, no matter how abstract or general, has been ultimately personal. Religion and government result from the action of personality upon the relations of God and man. The most amazing discovery of science is after all only the creature of someone's intellect. And what is art but the expression of the soul of the artist?

The charm of personality is what gives biography its perennial appeal. It is not so much what a man does as what he is that perpetuates his memory.



Character is the immortal element in any human life.

To portray the spirit of the subject truly is the height of biographical achievement. It is not necessary to embalm a man's career in several volumes: a vivid portrait may be sketched with a few illuminating anecdotes and a clear analysis of character. Vitality is essential to pen portraiture. If biography is to attain its proper place in literature, let biographers take heed of the consummate skill of the writers of fiction who make their heroes live.

J. E. B.

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APRIL 1923

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## THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE

The PALIMPSEST, issued monthly by the State Historical Society of Iowa, is devoted to the dissemination of Iowa History. Supplementing the other publications of this Society, it aims to present the materials of Iowa History in a form that is attractive and a style that is popular in the best sense—to the end that the story of our Commonwealth may be more widely read and cherished.

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH

*Superintendent*

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## THE MEANING OF PALIMPSESTS

In early times palimpsests were parchments or other materials from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete; and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the records of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

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## The Iowa

At noon on the twenty-eighth of March, 1896, the shipyard of William Cramp and Sons at Philadelphia was thronged with spectators—many of them prominent officials from Washington and the State of Iowa. The day was warm, and the sunlight sparkled on the water of the Delaware River and lighted up the keel of a giant ship which, resplendent in red and white paint, rested as if in a cradle at the head of an incline. This was the center of attraction.

There was a word of command, the sound of a saw somewhere below, and the great hull began to move. At this moment Mary Lord Drake, the daughter of the Governor of Iowa, dashed a bottle of champagne against the bow which towered high above her head and, as the sparkling wine ran down the side, said, "I christen thee *Iowa*". Not many heard the words, however, for innumerable whistles

blew a noisy welcome as the keel slipped down the ways and floated out upon the waters of the Delaware, while the thousands of spectators cheered the promise of a new national defender.

Perhaps it was prophetic of the future that, in a poem written on this occasion, S. H. M. Byers included this stanza:

Far better the ship go down  
And her guns, and her thousand men,  
In the depth of the sea to drown,  
Than ever to sail again  
With the day of her promise done,  
Or the star of her glory set,  
Or a thread from the standard gone  
That has never yielded yet.

Thus was born upon the surface of the waters the battleship *Iowa* which had been authorized by an act of Congress on July 19, 1892, with an initial appropriation of four million dollars. Slowly during the months which followed the keel became a warship, bearing upon her sides an armor of plated steel and having within five great boilers and two sets of triple expansion engines which were to give to the empty frame the throb of life.

When finally completed, at a total cost of \$5,871,-206.32, the *Iowa* well deserved the title, "queen of warships", which had been conferred upon her by a newspaper correspondent at the time of the launching. Three hundred and sixty feet long — one-fifth longer than the average city block — and over

seventy-two feet wide, the *Iowa* had a displacement of over eleven thousand tons. The lighting plant alone weighed forty-five tons. She carried four 12-inch, eight 8-inch, and six 4-inch guns, in addition to numerous smaller weapons, and was capable of a speed of sixteen knots an hour. An enthusiastic Iowa editor declared: "As an example of the American naval architect's skill she is an achievement of which we should well be proud, and a namesake in which any state might glory."

A crew of about five hundred officers and men, under the command of Captain W. T. Sampson, was assigned to the new battleship and on June 16, 1897, the *Iowa*, equipped with intellect as well as body and life, was put in commission.

On July 19th, the silver service, purchased with an appropriation of five thousand dollars by the Iowa General Assembly, was presented to the ship at Newport, Rhode Island, by C. G. McCarthy, State Auditor of Iowa, whose brief speech included this wish: "While we hope that our navy shall never turn from the face of an enemy, may we not indulge the larger hope that this stately Iowa and the other battleships and the cruisers — armored and unarmored — shall somehow find a place as messengers of peace rather than of war — be heralds of human progress rather than foemen in international strife." The gift was accepted by Captain Sampson.

Less than a year later, however, the *Iowa* was stationed outside the harbor of Santiago, Cuba,



where the Spanish fleet under the command of Admiral Pascual de Cervera had taken refuge. The Cuban situation and the sinking of the *Maine* had at last brought on war between Spain and the United States. In the bottle-like harbor, shut off from view by high cliffs, were the Spanish warships which had crossed the Atlantic, like the Armada of old, to combat Anglo-Saxon civilization. While American cruisers patrolled the ocean, and seaboard cities began to talk of possible bombardment, the Spanish fleet had slipped into the harbor and a squadron of the United States navy was watching the entrance, lest the enemy's ships again escape to threaten American cities and commerce.

An attempt had been made by Richmond P. Hobson and seven sailors to so block the harbor that the Spanish fleet could not come out, but the plan did not prove entirely successful. There was still a passage way, and the American warships, stationed in a semi-circle about the harbor — like huge cats patiently watching a mouse hole — were doubtless hoping that the enemy would venture out.

The morning of July 3, 1898, was clear and calm. On board the American ships preparations were being made for inspection and religious services, for it was Sunday. At the extreme eastern point of the crescent formed by the blockading squadron was the *New York*, the flagship of Rear Admiral Sampson who had been the first captain of the *Iowa*. Far to the west was the *Brooklyn*, one of the fastest of the

American ships, flying the pennant of Commodore W. S. Schley, the second in command. Between the two from east to west lay the *Indiana*, the *Oregon* — just in from her trip around South America — the *Iowa*, and the *Texas*. Smaller craft hovered about. The *New York* was just starting eastward to Siboney where Admiral Sampson was to have a conference with General William R. Shafter.

Suddenly, at nine-thirty-five, the Sabbath calm which lay over the scene was broken, when the *Iowa*, stationed directly opposite the mouth of the harbor, fired a shot from a small gun and raised the signal, "The enemy is attempting to escape". The same signal soon flew from every ship and the *Brooklyn* — the flagship in the absence of the *New York* — signalled, "Clear for action".

It was no false alarm: the Spanish ships were steaming out of the harbor. At the head, flying the Admiral's pennant, came the *Infanta Maria Teresa*, the red and yellow flag of Spain showing vividly against the green of the sloping Cuban shore. Behind her were the *Vizcaya*, the *Cristobal Colon*, and the *Almirante Oquendo*, followed by the smaller destroyers *Pluton* and *Furor*.

The signal from the flagship was hardly needed. With one accord the American sailors hurried to their places, literally throwing themselves down the ladders in their eagerness to reach their stations, while deep in the holds the engineers and firemen worked frantically to start their engines, for the

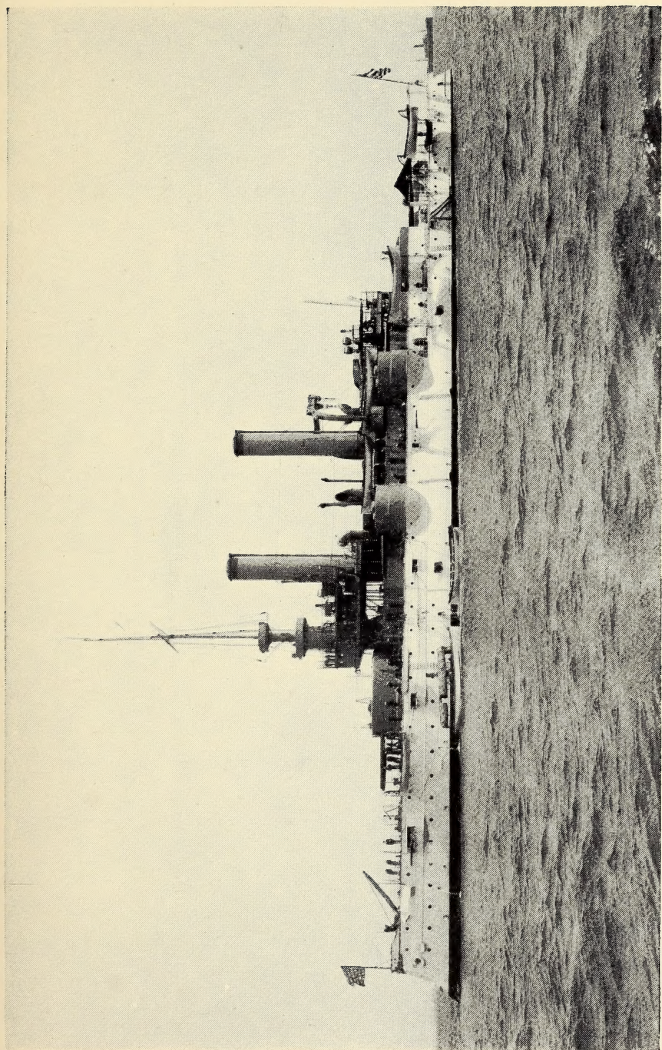


American cruisers were, of course, at rest. Almost as one ship the American fleet got into action, the faster warships like the *Brooklyn* and the *Oregon* leading the way. Under a vast cloud of smoke from the guns and smokestacks and later from fires on board the ships, the American squadron pursued the fleeing Spanish cruisers westward along the coast, pouring a rain of shot into whichever of the enemy happened to be within striking distance.

The Spanish ships were supposed to be faster than those of the United States, but the American sailors were enthusiastic and well prepared while the Spanish crews hoped at best for escape and not for victory. One by one the enemy ships, overwhelmed by the accuracy of the American gunners, turned in toward the shore, hoping at least to give the remnants of their men a chance to escape from the fire and shot-swept wrecks.

Nearest the harbor lay the smaller boats, the *Pluton* and *Furor*, and west of them were the burning hulks of the *Maria Teresa* and *Oquendo*. The *Vizcaya* — not long before an official guest in the harbor of New York — and the *Colon*, which had been protected to some extent by her sister ships, continued their desperate flight along the coast, still hoping to outdistance the slower American battleships and escape. There was no escape. The *Vizcaya* was soon on fire and American sailors were risking their lives to rescue the enemy from the burning wreck. The *Colon* continued a little farther





THE IOWA



along the coast, and then she too yielded to the combined attack of the *Oregon*, the *Brooklyn*, and the *Texas*. It was a quarter past one.

During the entire battle the American fleet lost only one man killed, and one seriously wounded. The enemy's loss was estimated at 323 killed, 151 wounded, and about 1800 prisoners.

The *Iowa*, having given the alarm, first attacked the *Teresa* in which she lodged two 12-inch shells that wrecked the steam pipes of the vessel and killed a number of the crew. Unable to handle the ship or work the guns in the face of the scalding steam and the fires which were soon raging as shell after shell found the target, the crew of the *Teresa* beached their ship and the *Iowa* for a time turned her guns upon the two destroyers which the converted yacht *Gloucester* was engaging. The smaller boats were soon put out of commission: the *Furor* was sunk and the *Pluton* was driven ashore not more than five miles from Santiago. Before long a shell penetrated one of the boilers of the *Pluton* and a vast geyser-like column of steam rose hundreds of feet in the air.

Leaving the wrecked destroyers, the *Iowa*, with some other battleships, concentrated upon the *Oquendo* and then upon the *Vizcaya*. When it was apparent that these Spanish ships were doomed, the *Indiana* was ordered back to the harbor, lest the *Alvarado* or the *Reina Mercedes* which had remained in the harbor should raid the transports to



the east; the *Iowa* was given permission to remain near the *Vizcaya* to help in the rescue of the crew; and the other ships went on in pursuit of the *Colon*.

Thus it happened that the *Iowa* received on board some two hundred and fifty Spanish prisoners from the sinking *Vizcaya*, including Captain Antonio Eulate. As the Spanish officer was lifted over the side of the *Iowa* the guard presented arms, the officer of the deck saluted, and the Spanish prisoners already on board stood at attention. Captain Eulate slowly rose to his feet, unbuckled his sword belt with some difficulty — for he had been wounded — kissed the hilt of his sword, and presented it to Captain Robley D. Evans, who declined to take the sword, but accepted the surrender and shook hands with the Spanish captain. The crew of the *Iowa*, stripped to the waist, blackened with powder, and covered with perspiration, broke into cheers.

As Captain Eulate was being conducted below for medical attention, he turned toward his wrecked and burning ship, stretched out his hand in farewell, and exclaimed, “Adios, *Vizcaya*”. As the words left his lips the magazine of the *Vizcaya* exploded and there rose a column of smoke and steam which was seen fifteen miles away.

But the *Iowa* was to receive a still more distinguished guest that day. Early in the afternoon Admiral Cervera, his son, and a number of other officers were brought on board the *Iowa*, escorted by Commander Richard Wainwright of the *Gloucester*.

The marine guard of eighty men paraded, the officers and crew of the *Vizcaya* were grouped on the quarter deck, while the crew of the *Iowa* clustered over the turrets and superstructure. As the Spanish commander stepped upon the deck, the American sailors manifested their admiration for the bravery of the Spaniards by cheering repeatedly, while Admiral Cervera, scantily clad, bareheaded, and barefooted, just as he had been rescued from the *Teresa*, stood bowing his thanks.

On board the *Iowa* there was nothing to mar the victory. Although she had been in the thick of the fight and had been struck several times by small projectiles and by two 6-inch shells, one of which started a small fire, not a single member of the crew had been killed or even seriously wounded.

The next twenty years in the career of the *Iowa* were uneventful: there was the usual routine of cruising, with frequent periods out of commission. In 1899, when the Iowa delegation met the Fifty-first Iowa Infantry on its return from the Philippine Islands, they attended church services on board the *Iowa*, then commanded by Captain C. F. Goodrich and anchored in the harbor at San Francisco.

A report of the ship for 1901 shows an expenditure of \$431,173.53 for maintenance during the year, about half of which was for the pay of officers and men. In 1907, the *Iowa* was in the squadron assembled off the Virginia coast in honor of the James-

town Exposition, but when the fleet left for its triumphal cruise around the world in December of that year the *Iowa* was left behind: already a new generation had supplanted her.

During the next decade the *Iowa* was on duty only part of the time. In July, 1912, for example, she was sent on a cruise with the naval militia — a warrior turned pedagogue. For several months just preceding the entrance of the United States into the World War, the old *Iowa* was used as a receiving ship, and during the war she was assigned to coast defense.

Finally in 1919, a little more than twenty years after the victory at Santiago, even the name “*Iowa*” was erased from the records and the old battleship was designated merely as the “B S 4”. About this time, the silver service, the gift of the Commonwealth for which the ship had been named, was removed to the Philadelphia navy yard where it still remains. In 1920 the former “pride of the navy” was used as a target for bombing planes, but suffered comparatively little damage.

The final chapter in the career of the *Iowa* was recorded in the Bay of Panama on the twenty-third of March, 1923, almost exactly twenty-seven years after the ship was launched. The veteran battleship had sailed for the last time down the Delaware River from her birthplace at Philadelphia, she had voyaged southward along the coast, and had passed



through the Panama Canal to the waters of the Pacific, where the spring maneuvers of the united American fleet were to be held.

There, surrounded by the new dreadnaughts, the *Iowa* made the supreme sacrifice for the sake of the American navy. Divested of her name, her crew, and her flag, the old warship was sent out under radio control as the target for the guns of the *Mississippi*, the new "queen of the navy"—a practical use for an old ship, perhaps, but unpleasantly suggestive of the treatment accorded aged or injured wolves by the pack. The officers of the fleet, the sailors, and a delegation of civilians, including high officials of the navy and about one hundred Senators and Representatives, were interested spectators.

The faithful *Iowa* responded to the control by wireless "as if the ghost of 'Fighting Bob' [Evans] might be on her bridge, and the spirits of those who manned her at Santiago standing at their battle stations." The sailors on the surrounding ships cheered as the shells, fired at a range of from eight to ten miles, found the target; and the officers watched through their field glasses as the lonely ship dodged and twisted as if conscious of her impending fate. Great water spouts rose where the projectiles struck and dashed over the battered ship. About four o'clock, when it was evident the *Iowa* could not remain afloat much longer, the *Mississippi* commenced using regular service shells at short

range. At last a shell smashed the *Iowa's* wireless attachment and the mortally wounded ship heeled over and began to sink.

The echoes of the big guns died away. The cheers of the sailors on the watching dreadnoughts were hushed; and, as the *Iowa* turned over and her smoke-stacks disappeared beneath the blue waters of the Pacific, the band of the *Maryland* played the Star Spangled Banner very slowly. Fifteen thousand men of the fleet snapped into salute, while the Secretary of the Navy and the other civilian spectators stood with bared heads. The last bars of the national anthem sounded across the waters just as the waves closed over the *Iowa* and at that moment the *Maryland* fired the first of a salute of twenty-one guns, the final honor to the old battleship. "She was a good ship," said Admiral Hiliary Jones, as he wiped his eyes, "and that was good shooting."

RUTH A. GALLAHER

## The Winter of Eighty-One

Imagine winter coming on the fifteenth of October without any warning — coming to stay too, and ushered in by a blizzard that lasted two days. Northwestern Iowa has seen much severe weather, but for snow fall and unrelenting cold the winter of 1880-1881 has had few rivals. A pioneer of O'Brien County, Thomas Barry, relates the following story of that memorable winter.

On October 15, 1880, the morning after we finished threshing, my wife and I struck off for Sheldon, twelve miles away, to get some flour at the mill and to do our winter trading. The air was frosty, the sun hidden, and the sky looked like a big, gray dome settling down over the prairie. From the near-by cornfields we could hear the thump, thump of the ears against the throw-boards of the huskers' wagons. There being no native timber, we were denied the reds and the golds of woodland October: the brown prairie stretched away in every direction as far as the eye could see. Out in the stubble the prairie chickens called, tumble weeds went hurrying on ahead of us, and rabbits bounded away from the road as we passed. Young cottonwoods, set around the farm yards for windbreaks, had lost their tender leaves, so that the straw-thatched barns and unpainted houses peeped between the naked branches.



"Lots of birds flying to-day," my wife remarked, as we jogged along, planning our day's program. The heavens were filled with wild ducks and geese flying swiftly southward.

To make haste we shopped separately, and so were not together when the snow began to fall at two o'clock. The air was so warm that we thought the storm was only a squall, and completed our preparations to return home about five. In the meantime the wind had risen. The snow that had already fallen was picked up and driven through the air with such terrific force that our horses refused to face the gale. Thinking of the children at home we urged them on, but they would not budge. Not until then did we fully realize that a blizzard was upon us, and that we would be forced to remain in town until it was over.

I could hear the wind moan around the rude hotel all night. The windows rattled in their loose frames so that we could not sleep. "God will care for our children," murmured my wife, while my thoughts strayed also to our unprotected stock, for as yet no one was prepared for winter.

The blizzard raged fiercely that night and all the next day, but the second morning dawned calm and clear. Equipped with a large scoopshovel, we began our homeward trip. After leaving the streets of Sheldon, which were somewhat protected by buildings, we hit what we thought ought to be the county line. Our horses, rested and headed toward home,

were anxious enough to get on, but the low, heavy wagon was clumsy in the deep snow.

Before we had gone very far the horses floundered and the wagon stuck in a big drift. For a little while I sat there, overcome by the scene surrounding us. Our friendly, brown landscape of two days ago was transformed into a still, cold, sparkling, white pall that stretched to the horizon in every direction. Cornfields were entirely submerged, straw piles had lost their identity and become mere mounds of snow, while the struggling, man-made groves only served to catch the drifting snow. I had often seen the prairie covered with snow but the feeling of awe and reverence for that spectacle, as I sat there not knowing the fate of all dearest to me, held me spellbound. My wife felt so too, I think, for instead of urging me to begin shoveling out of the drift, she said, "My, how much I'd give for the folks back East to see this sight."

As we plowed and shoveled our way on, while the sun rose high and then began to descend, our fear for those at home became more haunting. Fortunately, the blizzard was not followed by the usual intense cold, but nevertheless our fingers were numb with cold and our backs ached from the shoveling. Our team became more and more exhausted with the heavy pulling and lack of food.

Finally, as the sun was sending its last red darts over the white prairie, we came in sight of our place. We knew it was our home not by any familiar ob-

ject, but by its position from the road. Nothing was to be seen but the tops of our tallest trees. Everything was as still as death, lying under that heavy blanket of snow. In the middle of the yard there was a drift as high as the house. It was the work of only a few minutes to round that drift and reach the door. Inside we found the children all safe, but crying bitterly because they were sure we must be dead.

Our oldest boy, a lad of eleven, had kept the little sisters comfortable. When the blizzard began he had cut the tethers of the cattle that were tied in an open shed, and let them forage with the rest. Under a mound of snow, from which arose a tiny line of steam, we found all our pigs — about forty in number. Only two were dead. Chickens and turkeys went under straw stacks and stayed in holes rooted out by the hogs.

The day after we got home I walked to a German neighbor's house a mile away to inquire about my calves. He had seen nothing of mine but had lost two cows. "Don't valk no more, Tom; dey go dead," he said. Another neighbor who came to my house to borrow flour had seen my calves going with the storm, and I finally found them all safe, near a row of young willows, their backs humped up and their heads stuck in the snow.

Nearly all my stock was saved, but I had no feed. What corn we had husked before the blizzard I stored in the loft of my dwelling for seed. My boy and I gathered a little in sacks for the cattle, but the



snow kept piling up so high that at last we had to abandon the fields. Then I fed oats. It snowed about twice a week all winter.

A mover who was going from O'Brien County into Sioux stopped to feed himself and team. He had husked most of his corn, and had no stock. Since the snow had become so deep, it was difficult for his horses to pull big loads, so in order to make better time he stored some of his corn in my empty crib.

As the winter wore on, my oats ran out. Only my seed corn remained and it would not go far. The pigs squealed with hunger. "Save that seed corn," said my wife, "feed them the corn from the crib and when the owner comes back give him the pigs, but don't let them starve." I went then and fed another man's corn to my hogs.

During that terrible snow-bound winter we had no wood or coal for fuel. But the prairie slew came to our rescue. Early in the fall we had stacked some slew grass in the yard, and this, twisted tightly, served for fuel the entire winter. It required a good deal of time and energy to twist enough prairie hay to keep us warm, even for a day. Children soon learned the art and worked faithfully at the irksome task. It was a common sight to see piles of twisted grass near the doors of prairie homes.

My children, usually healthy, took sick in mid-winter with a high fever. When our home remedies failed I walked seven miles to Hospers with butter and eggs to exchange for medicine—we had no

money. I struck off in the morning through the snow. Spurred on by anxiety for the children, I was utterly exhausted when I reached the store. The storekeeper — who was druggist too — allowed me four cents a dozen for the eggs and four cents a pound for the butter. He tried to jolly me, saying that I must be out of tobacco to walk so far, but I told him the symptoms of the sick children, secured some medicine, and started for home just as it was beginning to snow.

For an hour I trudged along. Thicker and thicker came the blinding snow. I could not see. The tall grass which stuck up through the snow was my only guide. The dog that was with me seemed bewildered, following so closely he impeded my progress. I became numb with cold as the flying snow sifted into my clothes. After a time I gave up trying to find landmarks and depended upon the mercy of God to lead me to some shelter. I kept walking and finally, toward morning, struck a grove which fortunately proved to be my own. I threw myself down to rest and became so stiff I was scarcely able to move for three days. The children were a little better, but my wife, who had exhausted her strength caring for them and keeping the house warm during my absence, became ill. Since no one was able to bring in the slew grass, we were forced to carry down our seed corn and burn it.

Those of us whose cattle were spared supplied our less fortunate neighbors with milk. The milk,

frozen solid even in the house, was thawed enough to remove it from the container, then it was wrapped in cloth or paper and sent where it was needed.

Roads were blocked almost all the time. Just as soon as a path was broken, fresh snow and wind would wipe out the trail. Many a morning I was forced to shovel my way out of my dwelling. The only time a person ventured from home was for an occasional trip, usually on foot, to the nearest town or to a neighbor's to borrow or to lend. My wife — whose father was a railroad surgeon in Massachusetts — was very proficient in aiding the sick and she was often called upon to lend a hand in caring for needy neighbors.

There was only one social function in the county that winter so far as I know. Mrs. Bert McMillan, near Sheldon, had a rag bee. Three bob sled loads attended the party, making a long detour to follow a broken trail. About two o'clock it began snowing; the party immediately broke up; and the three bobs, keeping in a line, set out for home. They got lost and about ten o'clock came to Whitmore's place, where they spent the night. It was fully a week before some of the party reached home.

Toward evening, on fair days, I often rounded the big drift in my yard and reached a clearing to the south; then, facing the east, I would gaze over the soft, white prairie to where the gray sky closed down on our deserted world and wonder what was going on back East. I thought of the anxiety of our



kin, the companionship of old friends, and tried to imagine what was occupying the minds of politicians and legislators while we fought for mere existence. How quiet that prairie was: only a slight clicking from the frozen twigs of the cottonwoods broke the stillness. The wind seemed to be resting, regenerating its forces, waiting only for the stimulus of fresh snow, when it would again rage mercilessly and, after lashing us to shelter, would howl and moan while it pelted the snow against our dwellings and forced it in through every crevice.

We marked off each day on our calendar and, like everything else, that winter came to an end. Spring sunshine and spring duties met a hearty welcome. We crept out from our shelter like the badgers on the prairie, shook off our winter coma, greeted distant neighbors, and were thankful we survived.

When the snow melted our roofs went in with the weight. The corn which had been left in the fields had become soft and sour: neither cattle nor chickens would eat it. When my mover returned for his corn I told him what had been done with it and offered him the pigs. He smiled and said: "I don't want any of your hogs, but lend me your breaking plow and I'll call it square."

JOSEPHINE BARRY DONOVAN

## Tesson's Apple Orchard

When the first settlers began to filter into southeastern Iowa during the early thirties of the last century, they were struck with wonder and amazement on finding, in the primeval forests skirting the banks of the Mississippi River, evidence of an earlier habitation of the white man. Near the head of the Des Moines Rapids in the Mississippi was an old apple orchard. Already the trees had reached maturity and many of them had fallen into decay; some had been toppled over by storms and second growth saplings were springing up about their roots.

Whence came these apple trees? Whose hand had planted and protected them against the encroachments of the more hardy varieties of native timber with which they were promiscuously intermingled? It was thought improbable that the Indians, owing to their roving and shiftless disposition, had ever engaged in horticultural pursuits. Evidently some white men must have preceded the early settlers in a futile attempt at colonization and permanent settlement in that locality.

One hundred and thirty years elapsed between the time when Louis Joliet with Father Marquette one day in June, 1673, paddled their frail birch-bark canoes out of the mouth of the Wisconsin River onto the bosom of the mighty Mississippi, with a joy that

they could not express, and the time when the vast, unknown territory west of the Father of Waters came into the possession of the United States through the Louisiana Purchase. During this period, while Louisiana was under the rule of Spain, three land grants were made looking toward the permanent development of small areas within the boundaries of the present State of Iowa.

In 1788 a French-Canadian by the name of Julien Dubuque obtained permission from the Fox Indians to mine lead in the vicinity of the present city of Dubuque. For eight years he worked industriously, but realizing that the Indian grant did not fully establish his claim to land in the Spanish domain, he secured a formal confirmation of his mining rights from the Spanish Governor General in 1796, together with the possession of a piece of territory twenty-one miles long and nine miles wide along the Mississippi. Another undertaking was that of Basil Giard, a friend of Dubuque, who about 1796 took possession of and made improvements upon a strip of land a mile and a half wide and extending six miles east and west opposite the village of Prairie du Chien. The Spanish Lieutenant Governor of Upper Louisiana made a concession of this tract to Giard in 1800. Upon this old Spanish land grant, probably on the site of the Indian trading post Giard established, is now located the town of McGregor.

The third venture in the ownership of Iowa land was hazarded by Louis Honoré Tesson, the son of a



French-Canadian tailor who lived in St. Louis. Like so many of his race, Tesson seems to have responded to the lure of the wild. He voyaged up and down the Mississippi, traded with the Indians, and made the acquaintance of other hardy adventurers engaged in the same occupation. Perhaps he knew Dubuque and Giard, and learned of land grants from them. In the course of his travels, Tesson probably spent some time at the large Sac Indian village at the head of the Des Moines Rapids on the Iowa side. Here he seems to have made friends among the Indians for if they did not prevail upon him to come and establish a trading post near by, they at least were not hostile to the project.

This site, situated on a beautiful level terrace of second bottom land, fertile and picturesque, probably appealed to Tesson. A high prominence at the rear afforded a magnificent view of the river for miles in either direction, while below was an excellent landing for boats. Being about midway between the Spanish mines (Dubuque) and the seat of government at St. Louis, the place gave abundant promise of being a splendid location for a trading post, both from the standpoint of the Indians and those who plied the river. Moreover, the position at the head of the rapids was strategic as the beginning or end of a long portage.

With these considerations in mind, Tesson approached the Spanish government where his proposal to establish a trading post was favorably received.

In the past, Spanish traders had not been particularly successful in competition with the British, and it may have been for this reason that the officials at St. Louis were willing to foster any enterprise that gave promise of promoting the interests of Spain in the New World. On March 30, 1799, Louis Honoré Tesson received permission from Zenon Trudeau, Lieutenant Governor of the province of Upper Louisiana, to make a settlement upon 7056 arpents of land. According to the terms of this permit, "Mr. Louis Honoré [Tesson] is permitted to settle" at the head of the Des Moines Rapids, "and having effected his establishment he will write to the Governor General to obtain the concession of a suitable area in order to validate said establishment, and at the same time to make him useful in the trade in peltries in that country, to watch the savages and to keep them in the fealty which they owe His Majesty." He was also placed under obligations to plant trees and sow seeds, to instruct the Indians in the art of agriculture, and to spread the tenets of the Catholic faith. His conduct in these respects was to "serve him as a recommendation to be favored by the Government in such a way as to let him have the benefit of whatever he may do to contribute to the increase of the commerce in which he is to participate".

In order to secure a clear title to his land through confirmation by the Governor General, Tesson set about fulfilling the terms of the grant. Having pur-

chased some supplies in St. Louis, largely on credit, and obtained about a hundred seedling apple trees of several varieties at St. Charles, he proceeded on his northward journey, transporting the small apple trees, it is said, on pack mules. His family may have accompanied him upon this trip, for it is recorded that he married Theresa Creely in 1788 and that a son bearing the name of Louis Honoré was born in St. Louis about 1790.

Sometime in the summer of 1799 Tesson reached the site of his land grant. There he erected buildings, built some fences, cultivated a small patch, and planted his apple trees.

For a number of years he lived at the head of the rapids, fraternizing with the Indians, and trading in liquor, pelts, and baubles. Life on the very outskirts of civilization was probably not altogether monotonous. Dubuque, Giard, and other itinerant traders must have stopped on their way to St. Louis. There was plenty of excitement when the ice went out of the river, when the flood waters rose, and when the Indians went on the warpath. Living was easy. The river teemed with delectable fish, while game was abundant. Quail, prairie chickens, turkeys, and deer were commonplace. Wild strawberries, blackberries, and grapes varied the menu — the apple trees were probably too young to bear.

All of the circumstances pertaining to Tesson's undertaking were not so rosy. He seems to have been lacking in tact and general business ability. At



all events he incurred the enmity of some of the Indians and was no match for the shrewd British traders. His trading operations failed, and he fell deeper and deeper into debt at St. Louis. After four years of patience and forbearance on the part of his creditors, all of his property was attached. According to Spanish law and upon the authority of an order from the Lieutenant Governor of Upper Louisiana, P. A. Tablaux, acting as attorney for Joseph Robidoux, appeared unexpectedly before the door of Tesson's house on March 27, 1803, and there, accompanied by two witnesses and in the presence of Tesson, seized the property and gave notice that it would be sold in public at the door of the parish church in St. Louis for the benefit of the creditors. The auction occurred in customary form at "the conclusion of high mass, the people coming out in great number, after due notice given by the public crier of the town in a high and intelligible voice, on three successive Sundays, May 1, 8, 15, 1803". On the first Sunday only "twenty-five dollars was bid; on the second, thirty dollars; on the third, the last adjudication, one hundred dollars; and subsequently, one hundred and fifty dollars by Joseph Robidoux", Tesson's chief creditor. This offer was "repeated until twelve o'clock at noon; and the public retiring, the said Robidoux demanded a deed of his bid. It was cried at one o'clock, at two o'clock, and at three o'clock, and no other persons presenting themselves, the said land and appurtenances were adjudged to

him for the mentioned price of one hundred and fifty dollars, and having to receive this sum himself, he gave no security.”

Robidoux, finding himself possessed of property for which he had no immediate need, permitted Tesson to remain on the tract for some time thereafter. It is not known whether Tesson was finally ejected from the land, or whether he left of his own accord. He was still in the vicinity in 1805 when Lieutenant Zebulon M. Pike explored the Mississippi River from St. Louis to its source. Pike began the ascent of the Des Moines Rapids in the Mississippi on the morning of August 20th. After passing the first shoal, they met Mr. Ewing who had come to assist in negotiating the rapids. He was accompanied by “a French interpreter, four chiefs and 15 men of the Sac nation, in their canoes, bearing a flag of the United States.” The interpreter, Lieutenant Pike explained, was “Monsieur Louis Tisson”, who had “calculated on going with me as my interpreter”, and who “appeared much disappointed when I told him I had no instructions to that effect.” He also promised to discover mines, “which no person knew but himself; but, as I conceive him much of a hypocrite, and possessing great gasconism, I am happy he was not chosen for my voyage.”

On the death of Joseph Robidoux in 1809, the Tesson land, including all buildings and appurtenances thereto, was acquired by Thomas F. Riddick at an auction held on April 9, 1810. Riddick paid sixty-

three dollars for the property — the highest and last bid. Nearly thirty years later the legality of this transaction was confirmed and Tesson's title acquired in 1799 was established by the United States government when a land patent was issued covering six hundred and forty acres of the tract. This was the first patent to Iowa land and established a title record that dates back to 1799 — the oldest in the State.

From the time when the property passed into the hands of Riddick in 1810, the thread of the story is lost until eleven years later, when Isaac R. Campbell explored the southern portion of the Iowa country and later mentioned in his memoirs that at that date Chief Cut Nose lived in a village at the head of the Des Moines Rapids, near the site of the old establishment of Louis Tesson. "Below the creek running into the river," he writes, "on the lower side of the Indian town, were the remains of a deserted trading house, around which was growing a number of apple trees." Tesson himself had dropped from sight altogether. At what time he forsook the environs of his hapless undertaking, where he went, what he did, and where he died are unknown facts.

J. P. Cruikshank says that his father, Alexander Cruikshank, visited the old orchard in the summer of 1832. At that time about fifteen trees were bearing, though the fruit was of a very inferior quality. That the apples should be poor was not surprising, as it was obvious that the trees had been neglected for many, many years.



In the year 1834 the original Fort Des Moines was established by the United States government on the Tesson grant. The buildings of the fort were immediately adjacent to and north of the old apple orchard. At that time there were "many traces of a former settlement around the camp, the most prominent of which was the old orchard of apple-trees a short distance below. The orchard at that time contained some ten or fifteen trees in bearing condition. The fruit was very ordinary, being a common seedling. The Indians were in the habit of visiting the orchard, and gathering the fruit in its green state" so that none of it ever matured. There were also "remains of dirt, or adobe, chimneys visible in the same locality; which goes to prove that a settlement had existed there at some former period."

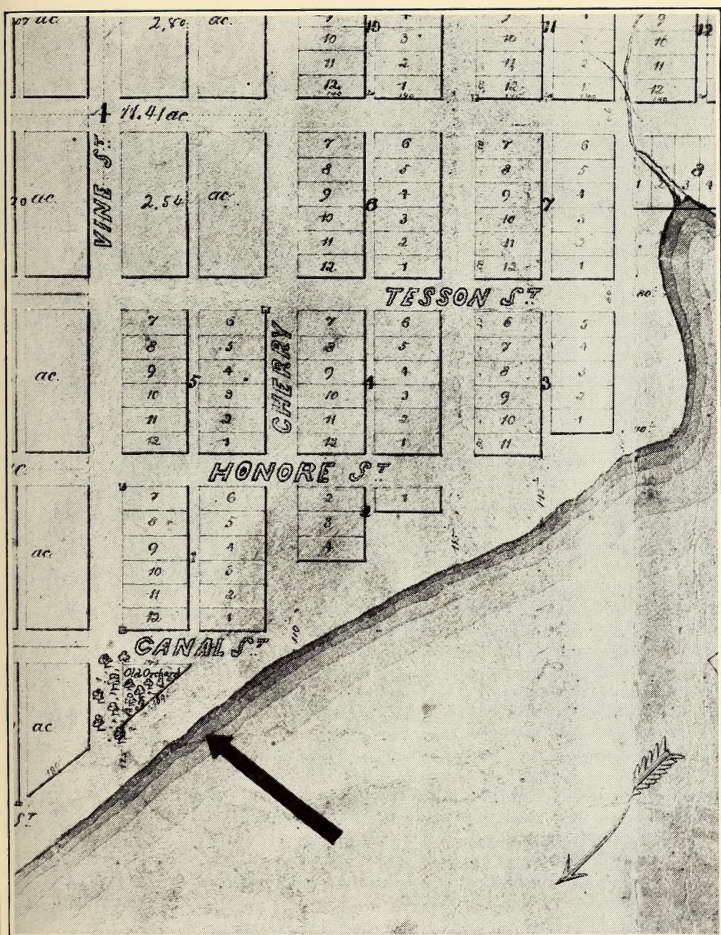
During the three years that the old fort was maintained, a number of men illustrious in the history of Iowa and the nation were there. The three companies of United States Dragoons, which constituted the garrison, were commanded by Stephen W. Kearny, famous western explorer. Albert M. Lea, in command of one of the companies that made a thousand-mile march across the prairies of Iowa and Minnesota in 1835, published the first popular description of the Iowa country. Zachary Taylor and Jefferson Davis were stationed at Fort Crawford at the time Fort Des Moines was established and may have visited the dragoons down the river. In 1837 Lieutenant Robert E. Lee, for whom Lee

County is said to have been named, was sent by the War Department to survey the Des Moines Rapids of the Mississippi for the purpose of making recommendations toward the improvement of the navigation of the river.

During the same year, 1837, when Fort Des Moines was abandoned, the town of Montrose was laid out by D. W. Kilbourne on the site of the old apple orchard. Unfortunately for Kilbourne, however, he failed to secure a perfect title to the land before beginning his operations, and the heirs of Thomas F. Riddick brought suit against him for possession. During the trial Kilbourne attempted to discredit Tesson and his activities altogether, bringing as a witness, Red Bird, who claimed that he himself had planted the apple trees and that Tesson was an impostor and a "che-wal-is-ki" (a rascal), who had never bought an acre of land. Red Bird's story was in part substantiated by Black Hawk but the court upheld the Tesson title to the land, giving the Riddick heirs possession. The case eventually found its way to the Supreme Court of the United States which affirmed the decisions of the lower courts.

As the town of Montrose developed, the Riddick heirs disposed of their inheritance to various people. The old orchard site at last came into the possession of George B. Dennison who, in 1874, conveyed the plot to the town of Montrose, to be held in trust for the Old Settlers' Association. The intention at that time was to erect an ornamental iron fence around





### THE TESSON APPLE ORCHARD SITE

THIS MAP IS REPRODUCED FROM THE PLAT OF MONTROSE MADE BY D. BALDWIN  
IN 1853 FOR THE HEIRS OF THOMAS F. RIDDICK





the premises and otherwise improve the appearance of the grounds, but these well-meant plans did not materialize, and only spasmodic efforts have since been made. None of the trees survive. The last one, according to the memory of the older residents of Montrose, died or disappeared nearly half a century ago.

In 1912 J. P. Cruikshank earnestly endeavored to rally sufficient interest to save the old orchard site from inundation by Lake Cooper, soon to be created by the completion of the Keokuk dam. It was impossible to inspire sufficient enthusiasm in the project, however, and during the second week of June, 1913, when the flood gates of the great dam were closed, the bleak, swirling waters of the Mississippi were transformed into a placid lake which slowly enveloped the greater portion of the historic spot.

BEN HUR WILSON

## Comment by the Editor

### HISTORICAL MEMOIRS

The facts of local history are usually more elusive than the circumstances of great events. Episodes of general interest have obvious effects, leave definite records, and serve as subjects of written description or comment; while the affairs of every-day life leave little specific evidence for the historian. Most people attach no significance to the daily routine, yet the common customs, foibles, and fancies are the substance of the times. Not once in a generation does a Samuel Pepys record his rising betimes, his very merry dining out, the purchase of a new "coat of the fashion" which pleased him well, his stint at the office — "and so early to bed, to-morrow being washing day."

In a new, sparsely inhabited country historical materials are apt to be scarce. Pioneers have little time or inclination to keep diaries. There are few or no newspapers to chronicle events; letters written to friends are usually lost or inaccessible; while public records are confined to a few subjects such as office holding, taxes, and the ownership of land. For these reasons the memory of the people who have seen and heard is often the only source for the facts of local history.



Reminiscences are sometimes unreliable; but inaccuracy is not an inherent characteristic of personal memoirs. Recollections can usually be verified, and they have the additional merit of vividness and first-hand information. It was a simple task, for example, to find in the weather reports that the winter of 1880-1881 was unusually severe, that the snow fall was very heavy, and that the velocity of the wind was sixty miles an hour on October 16th — the day of the blizzard in northwestern Iowa.

#### PROBABILITY OF TRUTH IN TRADITION

There is danger of placing too much faith in reminiscence, especially if it departs from the field of personal observation and invades the realm of tradition. Take an account of the disposal of Louis Tesson's old Spanish land grant in 1803. It has been alleged that the transaction was conducted in strict observance of the ancient Civil Law of Rome — that a twig of a tree and a clod of the earth were actually passed from the hand of the owner to the garment of the purchaser, who held up the corner of his cloak to receive the evidences of his new possessions. No one can positively prove that such a performance did not occur, yet no evidence can be found to substantiate the tale. The tradition is possible, but highly improbable.

Some stories of early days, which have not been completely confirmed, are not only within the range of possibility but are probable as well. The conclu-

sion that Tesson set out the old apple orchard which bears his name is based almost entirely on probability. It can not be asserted beyond the shadow of a doubt that he actually planted the trees which were later found upon his land. No record of that fact has yet been found.

There are at least three other possible explanations of the origin of the old orchard, none of which, however, are as plausible as the Tesson version. It is conceivable that the Indians set out the trees; but that is incompatible with Indian character. William Ewing, who was stationed across the river by the United States government as an Indian sub-agent, may have been responsible, for one of his duties was to teach the arts of agriculture to the Indians who lived at the head of the Des Moines Rapids on the Iowa side of the Mississippi. In 1806 Nicolas Boilvin was appointed Indian agent with headquarters at this same Sac village. He also was ordered to teach agriculture to the Indians by precept and example. "You should early procure Garden seeds, peach and other fruit stones, and apple seeds", advised the Secretary of War. "A Garden should be established for the most useful vegetables, and nurseries planted with fruit trees; for the purpose of distributing the most useful seeds and trees among such of the Chiefs as will take care to cultivate them."

It is unlikely that either Ewing or Boilvin would have located the orchard on the only piece of pri-

vately owned land in the vicinity. And so, in the absence of positive proof to the contrary, the most probable explanation may still be accepted and the credit for the first horticultural endeavor in Iowa may still be ascribed to Louis Tesson.

#### WHO WAS TESSON

If events are sometimes difficult to ascertain, how much more frequently are the names and identity of people lost to subsequent generations. Rare indeed is the man who can name his eight great grandparents. Of the millions who have lived and died only a few are known to the world.

Who was this Louis Honoré Tesson, whose surname is spelled in various ways and appears as Honoré almost as often as Tesson? For a few years he came upon the stage of Iowa history as a conspicuous land owner, associated with merchants and public officials, and then made his exit. No one cared whence he came, and no one knows where he went. He was only a minor actor in one of the scenes of the tremendous drama of the Great Valley.

Elliott Coues says that three Tessons lived in the Mississippi Valley in 1805. "Louis Tesson Honoré 1st, b. Canada, 1734, d. St. Louis, 1807, aged 73; married Magdalena Peterson, b. 1739, d. St. Louis, 1812. The family came to St. Louis from Kaskaskia. Among 8 children was — Louis Tesson Honoré 2d, eldest son; he married (1) Marie Duchouquette, (2) Theresa Creely, in 1788; by the latter he had Louis



Tesson Honoré 3d, b. St. Louis about 1790; married Amaranthe Dumoulin; d. there Aug. 20th, 1827."

Since the days of Pike and the fur traders, the Tessons have passed into the obscurity of commonalty whence they came. The later history of Iowa affords only occasional glimpses of men bearing the name of Tesson, and there is no assurance that they are related to the owner of the old Spanish land grant in Lee County.

When the Indians ceded the Half-breed Tract to the United States in 1824, a Louis Tesson witnessed the signing of the treaty. The names of Michael, Francis, and Edward Tesson appear in subsequent records of the Half-breed Tract. For many years a Joseph Tesson, born in Iowa in 1841 of part French parentage, resided with the Meskwaki Indians near Tama and served in the capacity of tribal interpreter. No doubt there are others, and hither and yon the descendants of Louis Tesson are living to-day though perchance they have never heard of their forefather who lived in Iowa under the reign of King Charles IV of Spain.

J. E. B.

# The **PALIMPSEST**

MAY 1923

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## THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE

The PALIMPSEST, issued monthly by the State Historical Society of Iowa, is devoted to the dissemination of Iowa History. Supplementing the other publications of this Society, it aims to present the materials of Iowa History in a form that is attractive and a style that is popular in the best sense—to the end that the story of our Commonwealth may be more widely read and cherished.

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH

*Superintendent*

## THE MEANING OF PALIMPSESTS

In early times palimpsests were parchments or other materials from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete; and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the records of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

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EDITED BY JOHN ELY BRIGGS

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## The First Iowa Field Day

At this time of the year college athletes in Iowa are sprinting, hurdling, jumping, pole vaulting, throwing the discus, hurling the javelin, and putting the shot, but thirty-three years ago track and field meets were practically unknown. John V. Crum, who first taught the East that natives of Iowa were as fleet-footed as any in the tidewater region, did not enter the University until the autumn of 1890. To be sure, track athletics had been introduced in some Iowa colleges by professors from eastern institutions, but not until late in the eighties was there any general interest in racing, jumping, and weight throwing. The first Iowa "field day" occurred in June, 1890 — the direct forerunner of the present Annual Track and Field Meet of the Iowa Collegiate Athletic Association.

The beginning of track and field athletics at the State University of Iowa was repeated, doubtless,

with different characters and different settings at other Hawkeye colleges. Some of the circumstances connected with the first field meet at the University, however, were unique and still cause a chuckle when recalled by those who witnessed the event. In the autumn of 1889 William P. Slattery and his cousin, Jeremiah Slattery, Irish lads from Dublin and nephews of Archbishop John Hennessy of Dubuque, entered the College of Medicine at Iowa City. They had been students for two years at Blackrock College, Dublin, where they had participated in track and field sports and had acquired considerable skill in several events. It was not long before they became popular at the University and awakened much interest and enthusiasm in athletics as they recounted their experiences at Blackrock and told of the "contists for pints" in which they had engaged.

During the winter of 1889-1890 the desire for a State athletic association which would bring together all of the best athletes in Iowa colleges at a State meet in the spring began to assume definite form. The Slatterys were eloquent in their support of the project. Accordingly, in February, 1890, enthusiastic students of the University elected Robert Bonson, F. G. Pierce, and T. P. Findley to represent them in a meeting at Mt. Pleasant where the details of the proposed association were to be agreed upon by representatives of the various Iowa colleges. Fourteen schools were represented and the organization was perfected. A name, the Inter-Collegiate

Athletic Association (I. C. A. A.), was chosen, a constitution was adopted, and Grinnell was selected as the place to hold the first State field meet sometime during the following June. B. L. Osgood of Iowa Wesleyan was elected president; F. G. Pierce of the State University, vice-president; and C. W. Gorham of Cornell, secretary and treasurer; while the executive committee was composed of A. C. Savage of Iowa College (Grinnell), T. P. Findley of the University, and C. W. Gorham of Cornell. It became the duty of this committee to arrange the program, to buy medals for the winners, to fix the exact date for the meet, and to levy a tax on the members of the association to pay necessary expenses.

News of the organization of the State athletic association awakened new enthusiasm at the University of Iowa. As soon as the weather permitted, members of the local athletic association began intensive training to compete with the athletes of the other colleges of the State. The two Slatterys explained to their associates how to start in the sprints, how to put the shot, how to pole vault, and how to high jump in the approved fashion of the day. One member of the squad, now a prominent lawyer, said, "The Slatterys told us what to do and how to do it. They showed us the first pair of running shoes we ever saw, and back of the Old Capitol they led us in our workouts."

To arouse still more interest in athletics, a mass meeting was held in the chapel room one afternoon



in April at which President Charles A. Schaeffer presided. He called upon several professors to speak who, according to a local reporter, showed an unusual knowledge of athletics in general and offered many valuable pointers to the members of the association. Plans developed for a local field day in May — the first event of its kind at the State University of Iowa. This contest, it was thought, would serve a two-fold purpose: it would stimulate greater interest in athletics at Iowa City, and it would offer an opportunity to select a team to represent the University at the State meet in June.

Saturday, May 10, 1890, was selected as the date for the local meet. Approximately twenty-five men began daily practice, some of them at Englert's Ball Park near the present location of Iowa Field, others at the fair-grounds east of the city, and a few back of the Old Capitol on the campus. The college newspaper, *The Vidette-Reporter*, was moved to remark: "With such an interest we cannot fail to do a grand work, in which we have the hearty endorsement of the Faculty and Board of Regents." The sporting editor announced that athletes "must now refrain from eating ice cream. Too bad, ladies." Nor did he hesitate to assume the rôle of trainer and to publish the following advice: "To The Athlete:— Eat rare meat, eggs and graham bread. Little tea, no coffee, no milk, no hot bread, rice or pastry. Fruit is not hurtful. Drink no water between meals; use lemon juice to quench thirst."

Preparations to make the first field day at S. U. I. a gala event continued. Business men of Iowa City donated money to purchase silver medals for the winner of first place in each event, and a local clothing store offered a fine silk umbrella as a special prize for the field champion. An all-day program was planned, with tennis matches beginning at nine o'clock in the forenoon, while in the afternoon there were to be twenty-two field and track events. The meet was to be held at Englert's Ball Park, a triangular field enclosed by high board fences on two sides and bounded by the Iowa River on the third. Twenty-five cents admitted the spectator to the entire program, while an admission price of thirty cents carried with it the privilege of sitting in the little grand stand. Miss Elizabeth Schaeffer, the daughter of the President of the University, a handsome young lady who was extremely popular with the student body, was selected to award the medals and to distribute the prizes at the close of the meet.

A cold rain the night before the gala day caused much anxious observation of weather conditions, but Saturday morning, May 10th, dawned clear and cool, and the local reporter declared that the hearts of the athletes "were made exceeding glad."

The tennis contests of the forenoon drew only a fair-sized crowd, but in the afternoon the little grand stand was filled and a large number of students and townspeople lined the side of the park. Loud cheers greeted the athletes as they marched onto the field.

All of the contestants except the two Slatterys began to remove their collars and ties and to roll up their sleeves and trousers, but each of the Irish lads threw aside the blanket in which he was wrapped and stood forth arrayed in a regulation track suit. The ladies present gasped in shocked surprise.

A four-page program had been placed in the hands of the spectators. The front page proclaimed the "FIRST ANNUAL FIELD DAY OF THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION" while below was printed a list of the officers of the association, the names of the field day committee, field officers, judges, starter, time keepers, measurers, and scorers. On the two inside pages were listed the twenty-two events and the names of the entrants in each. A space was provided where the spectator might write the name of the winner of first and second place and the record made in each event. The following information also appeared at the bottom of the third page: "The winner in each single event gets 2 points, the 2d man a point. The man scoring the greatest number of points will be declared FIELD CHAMPION."

Lieutenant G. W. Read, head of the military department and during the World War a major general commanding the Second Army Corps in France, was master of ceremonies. The first event was a race between the classes of 1890, 1891, 1892, and 1893. Judges and starters took their stations and the meet began. Amid loud applause from the seniors the representative of the class of 1890



breasted the tape, followed by the runner for the class of 1893. The time was  $12\frac{1}{2}$  seconds.

Enthusiasm reigned. Throughout the afternoon the contestants were heartily cheered, and time after time the field echoed with the yell: "Hi! Hi! Hi! S. U. I! Giddy, giddy, uni, S. U. I!" The two Slatterys entered nearly every event and each succeeded in winning a large number of points. Jerry won the football kick by booting the pigskin a distance of 167 feet, he cleared the bar in the pole vault at the height of 7 feet and 7 inches which was high enough to win, took first place in the running broad jump with a leap of 19 feet and  $3\frac{3}{4}$  inches, and won the hop, step, and jump with a record of 38 feet and 8 inches. Moreover, he placed second in the fifty yard dash, the one hundred yard dash, the two hundred and twenty yard "run", the standing high jump, and the hammer throw. Meanwhile, his cousin William won the four hundred and forty yard race in 68 seconds, an event which the reporter described as "the prettiest and closest race of the afternoon and elicited prolonged applause and toots." He also made a running high jump of 61 inches and ran the one hundred and twenty yard hurdle race in  $22\frac{1}{5}$  seconds — winning both events. Second place in the running broad jump gave him a total of seven points while his cousin, Jerry, with a total of thirteen points was the undisputed champion of the day.

Robert Bonson threw the baseball 284 feet and 6

inches. T. P. Findley won first place in the fifty yard dash, the one hundred yard dash, and the two hundred and twenty yard run. F. A. Hastings made a standing broad jump of 11 feet and 3¼ inches and a standing high jump of 51 inches. G. H. Clark put the sixteen pound shot 35 feet and 9 inches, and J. H. Stotts threw the hammer 102 feet. Lack of time made it necessary to omit the three-legged race, the flag race, and the tug of war, but the boxing exhibition between E. R. Lewis and James Mara afforded much amusement and received loud applause. Lewis won the decision.

Late in the afternoon the winners of first and second places lined up to pass before Miss Schaeffer to receive their medals. Jerry Slattery, the field champion, headed the procession, and an eye-witness testified that, as the young Irishman in his track suit stepped before the young lady to receive the silk umbrella and the medals he had won, the peaches and cream complexion of the donor changed to flaming scarlet.

Although no wonderful records were made that afternoon, the marks established were none the less commendable in view of the fact that the young fellows who participated were for the most part untrained in track work. Probably the creation of a genuine interest in this form of athletics was the most noteworthy result of the first field day at the State University of Iowa.

During the following weeks attention was focused

upon the State meet. The *News Letter* of Grinnell, which had been the official mouthpiece of the I. C. A. A., urged the attendance of large delegations from other colleges, and the promise that ice cream and strawberries would be served to all visitors was regarded as an additional inducement. Students at the University petitioned the faculty for a holiday and the request was granted. Strenuous workouts daily helped to develop the Iowa squad into a well balanced team. The Slatterys argued long and ardently on the propriety of the entire team wearing track suits at the meet, and finally won their point.

On the morning of June 6, 1890, the Iowa team of nearly twenty members, accompanied by a beribboned delegation of one hundred and seventy-five rooters, boarded the train bound for Grinnell to witness the First Annual Field Day of the Inter-Collegiate Athletic Association. The University crowd was the largest delegation from anywhere outside of Grinnell, and the *News Letter* acknowledged that it "had more lung power than all the other colleges put together."

An all-day program had been arranged, the tennis matches beginning at ten o'clock in the morning on the campus, the field and track events starting at two in the afternoon at the fair-grounds, and in the evening there was to be boxing, saber swinging, and fencing at the opera house. For officials the executive committee had selected C. W. Gorham of Cornell, chief marshal of the day; A. C. Savage of



Grinnell, day superintendent; T. P. Findley of the University, evening superintendent; Professor A. K. Jones of Cedar Rapids, referee; Lieutenant G. W. Read of the University, caller; Ed. Svoboda of Cedar Rapids, starter; and Robert Bonson of the University, E. A. Marsh of Grinnell, and C. A. Torrey of Cornell, timers.

Cornell won the tennis doubles and Grinnell the singles for men, but Miss Nellie Cox captured the tennis singles for women and thereby won a first for S. U. I.

Early in the afternoon a large crowd invaded the fair-grounds before the committee had provided for the collection of admission. As one reporter put it, the Association lost several dollars through this "soupy" oversight.

Probably the most hotly contested race of the afternoon was the half mile run. C. P. Chase of Iowa led almost the entire distance only to see J. McIlrath of Grinnell win by a spectacular spurt at the finish. In the pole vault J. F. Reed of Grinnell and Jerry Slattery of Iowa were tied at 8 feet and 11 inches. Reed then cleared the bar at 8 feet and 11½ inches but Slattery in attempting 9 feet fell and broke his hand. In the hurdle race W. P. Slattery breasted the tape "in the remarkable time of 18¼ seconds", but J. F. Reed of Grinnell was declared victor because "Slattery had touched a hurdle." T. P. Findley of Iowa won the fifty yard dash, the seventy-five yard dash, and the one hundred yard

dash in thrilling fashion, and carried off the gold medal offered by the *News Letter* to the individual champion.

The three-legged race, run for Iowa by T. P. Findley and W. P. Slattery and for Grinnell by W. J. Barrette and W. R. Davis, was close, but owing to faults on both sides the judges ordered it to be run again. This Barrette and Davis refused to do and the race was forfeited to Iowa. On the other hand the Iowa tug of war team failed to materialize and this event was forfeited to Grinnell. At the close of the afternoon Iowa led Grinnell, the closest competitor, by a few points.

#### SUMMARY OF EVENTS

Baseball throw — W. Zmunt (Ames), first; R. Bonson (Iowa), second. Distance, 362 feet, 9 inches.

Fifty yard dash — T. P. Findley (Iowa), first; C. C. Langley (Cornell), second. Time,  $5\frac{3}{5}$  seconds.

Football place kick — J. Slattery (Iowa), first. Distance, 187 feet, 2 inches. No second place.

Running broad jump — W. P. Slattery (Iowa), first; C. E. Locke (Cornell), second. Distance, 20 feet,  $10\frac{1}{2}$  inches.

Sixteen pound shot put — G. H. Clark (Iowa), first; S. R. Ure (Grinnell), second. Distance, 33 feet,  $5\frac{1}{4}$  inches.

One hundred yard dash — T. P. Findley (Iowa), first; C. W. McEldery (Iowa Wesleyan), second. Time,  $10\frac{1}{5}$  seconds.

Hitch and kick — E. Woodbury (Grinnell), first; C. Cathcart (Cornell), second. Height, 8 feet, 2 inches.

Running high jump — J. Slattery (Iowa), first. Height, 5 feet, 3 inches. No second place.

One hundred and twenty yard hurdle (10 flights) — J. F. Reed (Grinnell), first; C. C. Langley (Cornell), second. No time recorded.

Hammer throw — W. D. Bailey (Grinnell), first; J. H. Stotts (Iowa), second. Distance, 76 feet, 5½ inches.

Seventy-five yard dash — T. P. Findley (Iowa), first; C. Boardman (Cornell), second. Time, 7¾ seconds.

Pole vault — J. F. Reed (Grinnell), first; J. Slattery (Iowa), second. Height, 8 feet, 11½ inches.

Standing broad jump — G. P. Ruggles (Upper Iowa), first; F. A. Hastings (Iowa), second. Distance, 12 feet, 2½ inches.

Two hundred and twenty yard run — C. W. McEl-dery (Iowa Wesleyan), first; A. M. Cowden (Grinnell), second. Time, 23¼ seconds.

Half mile run — J. McIlrath (Grinnell), first; C. P. Chase (Iowa), second. Time, 2 minutes, 16½ seconds.

Tug of war — Awarded to Grinnell.

Three-legged race — Awarded to Iowa.

The evening program at the opera house was well patronized, but a poor stage placed the contestants



at a disadvantage. The Cornell heavyweight decided not to box and so E. R. Lewis and James Mara, both of Iowa, sparred three rounds, the former winning the medal. F. G. Pierce of Iowa and Cobb of Cornell competed in a middleweight boxing match which Cobb won on points, twenty-four to twenty-one. Arthur Gorrell of Iowa favored the audience with an exhibition of saber swinging, while Julius Lischer of Iowa and C. D. Premier of Cornell engaged in an exhibition of fencing which was won by Lischer. The successes of the evening, added to those of the forenoon and afternoon, made the State University of Iowa clearly the winner of the first I. C. A. A. Field Day. The rooters from Iowa City were delirious with happiness.

After the evening program at the opera house the visiting delegations were entertained at a reception tendered by the Grinnell students in the chapel. An orchestra furnished music, a male quartette sang several songs, and after the refreshments of strawberries and ice cream had banished any hard feelings that may have lingered from the stiff competition of the day, the remainder of the time was spent in convivial good-fellowship.

Nearly thirty-three years have elapsed since the first State meet of the Inter-Collegiate Athletic Association. All of the records established in 1890 have been broken, but even so the time made by Findley in the dashes and the distance of the broad jump compare favorably with the performances in

those events to-day. No football kick or baseball throw, no hitch and kick or hop, step, and jump appear on the program nowadays, and it is no longer customary to serve the visiting athletes with strawberries and ice cream. Other events, unknown to the pioneer field and track stars, have appeared. The javelin throw, the discus throw, the mile and the two mile runs, and the relay races have replaced the three-legged race and the tug of war.

Many of the men who participated in the first annual field day of the I. C. A. A. have won distinction in their chosen professions. They include among their number lawyers, judges, doctors, and educators of national reputation. Jerry Slattery, the hero of the first meet in Iowa City and spectacular performer at Grinnell, became a surgeon in Chicago. At the beginning of the Boer War, he enlisted in a regiment of Irish volunteers and was killed in action in South Africa, fighting his traditional enemy, the British, with the same dash that had made him a favorite on the cinder path.

To the athletes from the colleges of Iowa who struggled for mastery on field and track at Grinnell in 1890 belongs the credit for inaugurating one of the most important institutions in the athletic history of Iowa. The annual State meet of to-day and tomorrow is their monument.

BRUCE E. MAHAN

## The Capital on Wheels

American seats of government, unlike the capitals of older countries, have always been migratory. Unusual circumstances such as the rapid expansion of the public domain, the constantly shifting population, and the democratic demand for centrally located political centers have been accountable for the instability of capital sites. There are few States, especially in the West, whose capitals remain where they were first established, while "county-seat contests" form a prominent and ever-present chapter of local history. Nor has the national capital been an exception to the rule. Within fifteen years during the formative period of the nation the seat of the national government was changed twelve times before it was finally established at Washington.

Since 1800 there have been three distinct movements to relocate the national capital. The first attempt was induced by the burning of the Capitol by the British in 1814. The second effort, which occurred in 1846, was the result of political and sectional interests and differences. The third and most formidable movement came after the Civil War. This movement originated in the Mississippi Valley and almost assumed the proportions of a national issue.



The agitation for the relocation of the national capital in 1846 was reflected in the First General Assembly of Iowa which convened at Iowa City in the fall of that year. Early in the session the question of selecting a new site for the State capital came before the Assembly and elicited much debate. Representative S. B. Olmstead became so obsessed with the spirit of capital removal that he introduced a joint resolution to move the national seat of government to the Raccoon Forks of the Des Moines River. The motion was tabled indefinitely.

Numerous citizens of Iowa City and Johnson County, who were provoked by the efforts to relocate the State capital, presented a petition begging "among other novelties, that the General Assembly permit the citizens of said county to enjoy reasonable health and abundant crops, together with other blessings denied them by nature and their own energies." In reporting upon this petition the committee on agriculture ventured the opinion with an air of badinage that when "your Committee takes into consideration the growing importance of the country about the Raccoon Forks of the Desmoines river, and compare the same with the District of Columbia, they cannot refrain from expressing their belief that although our Representatives may not be able to remove said Seat of Government 'immediately,' the day is nevertheless, not far distant, when this great object will have been accomplished, thus bringing the Seat of the Federal Government in

juxtaposition with your petitioners; thereby affording them a more favorable opportunity to press their claims upon that august Body, the Congress of the United States."

Visionary as this proposal now appears it was not without some foundation. A generation later the question of removing the national capital to the Mississippi Valley commanded the serious attention of leading statesmen. A mere catalogue of activities in behalf of the "scheme to put the capital on wheels" presents a formidable aspect. Two national conventions were held, a State constitutional convention took action, county boards, city councils, and State legislatures made bids and offered grants of land for the capital, newspaper editors wrote columns of editorials on the subject, pamphlets were published, a lobby was maintained at Washington, and several resolutions were offered in Congress.

There were several causes for the agitation. The remarkable increase of the population of mid-western States, particularly Illinois, Missouri, and Iowa, had shifted the center of population of the nation to western Ohio. The experience of the Civil War had reminded the people of the unstrategic location of Washington as the seat of government. There was also a prevalent opinion that the inhabitants of the District of Columbia were not only averse to honest government but were obstructing the work of political reconstruction. Moreover, there seemed to be a growing realization of the unity of the Mississippi



Valley: the old slavery line was forgotten in the vision of the great valley as the dominant section of the nation — the “heart of the continent”.

The demand for the removal of the national capital to the West reduced to a definite issue found expression in the efforts to obtain appropriations for extensive improvements in Washington. The government had outgrown its habitation. The question in its simplest form was whether new and expensive buildings should be erected in Washington or at some other more centrally located site.

The contest began in the second session of the Fortieth Congress when Representative H. E. Paine of Milwaukee offered a resolution that “the seat of government ought to be removed to the Valley of the Mississippi.” After some facetious debate the previous question was ordered and to the astonishment of the eastern jokers the proposition received the support of seventy-seven members of the House, while only ninety-seven could be mustered against it. “Considering that this was the first time a proposition for the relocation of the Capital has ever been seriously entertained or acted upon, the result ought to be accepted as an encouraging one”, thought the *Iowa State Register*. William B. Allison, Grenville M. Dodge, Asahel W. Hubbard, William Loughridge, Hiram Price, and James F. Wilson — the entire Iowa delegation — voted for the resolution.

Later in 1868 John A. Logan of Illinois, the recog-



nized champion of capital removal in Congress, introduced a resolution calling for the appointment of a committee "to inquire into the propriety and expediency of removing the seat of the General Government from said city of Washington to a point near the geographical center of the Republic". This resolution was vigorously opposed as "a foul slander" on the people of the District of Columbia, and was defeated so decisively that the agitation for capital removal was temporarily stilled in the House of Representatives.

The newspaper discussion continued, however, led by Joseph Medill, the editor of the *Chicago Tribune*. Richard Edwards, President of the Illinois State Normal School, urged that the capital be moved to Rock Island, "that anomalous tract of 900 acres of government land lying in the Mississippi", situated in the pathway of the nation and "one of the most attractive spots in the United States". The *Iowa State Register* suggested that "the available ten miles square might be found in Iowa, somewhere near the junction of the main branches of the Des Moines River".

In September, 1869, a big commercial convention was held in Keokuk, Iowa, to boost for river improvement and the development of the resources of the Mississippi Valley. It was at this convention under the leadership of Samuel Miller, a Justice of the United States Supreme Court and a resident of Keokuk, that the first bid of the West was made for

the national capital before a large representative gathering.

Meanwhile, a National Capital Convention had been called to meet in St. Louis on October 20, 1869. The Governors of all of the States were invited to appoint two delegates for each Congressional district and four from the State at large. Twenty-one States and Territories responded. To represent Iowa Governor Samuel Merrill appointed ex-Governor Ralph P. Lowe, President G. F. Magoun of Iowa College (Grinnell), Maturin L. Fisher, and A. W. Hubbard from the State at large while the twelve district representatives were Augustus C. Dodge, James F. Wilson, Samuel J. Kirkwood, J. M. Tuttle, Grenville M. Dodge, H. E. Newell, G. M. Woodbury, A. H. Hamilton, W. E. Leffingwell, J. G. Patterson, Theodore Hawley, and Hiram Price. In the opinion of the *Chicago Tribune* this was "one of the strongest and ablest delegations ever sent to any convention, by any state for any purpose".

Governor Merrill believed that every consideration of the fitness of things, convenience, and military safety pointed to the removal of the capital at no distant day. He prophesied that within twenty years, "and probably forever thereafter, the heart of the nation will be not far east of the southeastern corner of Iowa." The location of the capital in the great valley — the center of population, political power, industrial achievement, and eventually of wealth — would, he thought, strengthen the Union



by harmonizing sectional interests and by dispelling the feeling that the more distant States and Territories were regarded more as dependencies of the government than as integral parts of the nation. "Locate the capital centrally," he declared, "and no matter how extensive the boundaries of the republic, each section would feel that it had an equal part in the government, equally participating in its benefits, and sharing equally in its responsibilities." Even though "our republic should be extended over the whole continent of North America" the Mississippi Valley would still be the proper place for a central capital. In view of the contemplated relocation of the seat of government the Governor believed it was "the clear duty of our representatives in Congress to decline to vote for further expenditures for the national buildings at the present capital."

The National Capital Convention met in the Mercantile Library Hall in St. Louis on the afternoon of October 20, 1869. Ralph P. Lowe, chairman of the Iowa delegation, was elected temporary chairman of the convention. The first day was consumed with organization and many speeches, some of which bordered on the ridiculous. But in the main the speeches were serious and the men were in earnest. The chief work of the convention — the adoption of resolutions — was accomplished on the second day.

#### RESOLUTIONS OF THE CONVENTION

WHEREAS, The present site of the national capital was selected as the most central point, when the people of this



republic, only a few millions in numbers, inhabited only a narrow strip of country along the Atlantic coast; and,

WHEREAS, The population of this republic has increased thirteen fold since then, and spread over a vast continent, of which the States in existence when the seat of government was located, form only the eastern edge; and,

WHEREAS, The present location of the national capital is notoriously inconvenient in times of peace, as the darkest pages of our national history demonstrate, in times of war or domestic turbulence is so dangerously exposed as to require vast armaments and untold millions of money for its special defense; and,

WHEREAS, All the reasons which caused the location of the seat of government where it now is, have, by the enormous development of the country, and a corresponding change in the wants of the people, become utterly obsolete; therefore,

1. *Resolved*, That it is absurd to suppose that the handful of inhabitants in 1789, just emerging from colonial vassalage, before steamboats, railways, telegraphs, or power-presses were dreamed of, or a mile of turnpike or canal constructed, possessed the authority or desired to exercise the power of fixing the site of the capital forever, on the banks of the Potomac, against the will and interests of the hundreds of millions who might come after them.

2. That the people have endured the present illy-located capital for three-quarters of a century, patiently waiting for the western territory of the Union to be peopled and organized into States, and until the center of population, area, and wealth could be determined, when a permanent place of residence for the government could be selected. That time has now come. All sectional issues are settled;

all dangerous domestic variances disposed of; a new era has been entered upon, and a new departure taken.

3. That in the language of James Madison, in the Congress of 1789, "an equal attention to the rights of the community, is the basis of republics. If we consider the effects of legislative power on the aggregate community, we must feel equal inducement to look to the center in order to find the proper seat of government." This equal attention has not been and cannot be given to the interests and rights of the people, so long as the capital is located in an inconvenient section of the Union.

4. That the vast and fertile region known as the Mississippi Valley, must for all time be the seat of empire of this continent, and exert the controlling influence in the nation, because it is homogeneous in its interests, and too powerful even to permit the outlying States to sever their connection with the Union. This vast plain will always be the surplus food and fiber-producing portion of the continent and the great market for the fine fabrics and tropical productions of the other sections of the republic. This immense basin must have numerous outlets and channels of cheap and swift communication by water and rail with the seaboard, for the egress of its products and ingress of its exchanges. Therefore, whatever policy the government may pursue that tends to multiply, improve, or enlarge those arteries of commerce, must result in common advantage to the whole Union — to the seaboard States equally with those of the center.

5. That the natural, convenient, and inevitable place for the capital of the republic is in the heart of this valley, where the center of population, wealth, and power is irresistibly gravitating; where the government, surrounded by



numerous millions of brave and Union-loving citizens, would be forever safe against foreign foes or sectional seditions, and where it would need neither armaments nor standing armies for its protection.

6. That while advocating the removal of the seat of government to the Mississippi Valley, we do not mean to serve the interests of any particular locality, but that we urge Congress to appoint a commission for the purpose of selecting a convenient site for the national capital in this great valley of the Mississippi, pledging ourselves to be satisfied with and to abide by the decision to be arrived at by the national legislature.

7. That in urging the removal of the national capital from its present inconvenient, out-of-the-way, and exposed location in the far East we are in earnest, and that we shall not cease in our efforts until that end is accomplished, firmly believing that the absolute necessity for the removal will become more apparent every day, and the majority of the American people will not long permit their interests and convenience to be disregarded.

8. That the removal of the national capital being only a question of time, we emphatically oppose and condemn all expenditures of money for enlargement of government buildings, and the erection of new ones at the present seat of the national Government, as a useless and wanton waste of the property of the people.

The St. Louis convention did not have much influence upon public opinion. Very little attention was paid to the project. General W. T. Sherman assured the people of Washington that they could calm their fears of losing the capital for he declared



that it would take a hundred years to get a removal motion through the House of Representatives, another hundred years to pass the Senate, a hundred and one years to agree upon a location, and then removal would be delayed fifty years in securing the necessary appropriations and erecting the buildings.

The Thirteenth General Assembly of Iowa convened on January 10, 1870, and a few days later Mr. Lowe made his report of the St. Louis convention to the Governor. He stated that "a goodly number" of the Iowa delegates had attended the convention, had "heartily participated in its proceedings," and had concurred in the resolutions that were adopted "without a dissenting voice". Nearly all of the States of the West and Southwest were represented in the convention, he asserted, "and their action in the premises was marked with wonderful unanimity and with that earnestness of conviction which would seem to take no denial in the final consummation of the measure." He added, significantly, that the delegates from Iowa, "so far as they lawfully could do so, have committed their State to the policy of removing the seat of the national government to the Mississippi valley — a measure of very great importance to the people of the West; and they would rejoice to know that their personal pledges upon the subject, should be supported by the more authoritative expression of the General Assembly of their State in the same direction."

National capital removal was made the subject of

a special message by Governor Merrill to the General Assembly on the last day of January, 1870, and he submitted the resolutions of the St. Louis convention together with Chairman Lowe's report for legislative consideration. Prior to this, however, on January 17th, James D. Wright had offered a resolution in the Senate proposing to instruct Iowa members of Congress to use their influence against any further appropriations for public buildings in Washington. This resolution was referred to the committee on federal relations which reported a substitute three days later that included the additional instruction for Iowa Congressmen "to use all honorable means to effect at the earliest practical period, a removal of the seat of Government from Washington City to some point in the great Valley of the Mississippi."

On January 27th the resolution came before the Senate for consideration. Senator Charles Beardsley of Burlington declared that the people in the Mississippi Valley had decided "that the National Capital *ought* to be removed; that it *will* be removed; and that it is only a question of time as to that removal." Senator John G. Patterson of Charles City emphasized the military advantage of having the national capital located in "this beautiful Valley of the West" because then "it would be beyond the power of a foreign foe, until they would pass through the densely populated States, to the very center of our Nation. They could never reach



our public archives by sea or railroad, and in this Valley they would be protected against the united powers of the foreign nations." Among other reasons for capital removal he mentioned the convenience of members of Congress, the cementing of national interests, the support of the Southern States, and the fact that "that strong iron band, the great Pacific railroad" centered in the Mississippi Valley.

Half in fun Senator William Larrabee proposed "to cede to the United States some portion of our territory to assist in accomplishing this removal of our National Capital". He thought "perhaps Lee county would like the privilege of paying off some of her bond indebtedness in this manner and have the Capital removed to that place, but I suppose that our democratic friends would object to having Lee county ceded to the United States for that purpose, though they would be willing no doubt to have the Capital located at Keokuk; and in that case I would suggest Des Moines county."

Thereupon Senator Beardsley expressed the hope that Senator Larrabee had not intended anything personal in his allusion to Lee County. "I hope he does not intend to convey the idea", said Mr. Beardsley, "that so many of the citizens of Lee county are now called upon to go to Washington City as Cabinet Ministers, Senators, Judges, members of Congress and Clerks in the various departments that it would be a saving of expense to bring



the capital to Keokuk. I must defend my neighbors down there from any such imputation as this.”

Needless to say the substitute resolution passed the Senate almost unanimously. Meanwhile, a joint resolution with the following elaborate preamble had been introduced in the House by John W. Traer and referred to the committee on federal relations, of which John A. Kasson was chairman.

WHEREAS, The question of the removal and re-location, permanently, of the seat of government of the United States at some point more in consonance with the views and wishes of the people, is now agitating the public mind; and,

WHEREAS, The great Mississippi valley lies equi-distant from ocean and ocean, draining by her rivers one-half of the continent, and capable of floating on their bosom the commerce of the entire nation, crossed and re-crossed by the great arteries of commerce and travel, competing for the trade of the sea-board cities; and,

WHEREAS, Her unbounded natural resources, combining every element of future greatness, together with her rapid comparative increase of population, and the energy and intelligence of her people, all point unmistakably to her, in no distant future, as the seat of wealth, population, and manufactures of the Union.

On February 5th the Senate resolution, instead of the one offered by Mr. Traer, was reported to the House with a minor amendment which was readily accepted. To the passage of the resolution, however, John P. Irish was unalterably opposed. “I do

not want to make any contest about this resolution," he said, "instructing our Senators and Representatives in Congress, but I really do hope this resolution will not pass. I am aware that it has become very fashionable for western men to claim that we are entitled to the removal of the National Capital into the West. I fear many are using it as a sort of buncombe. For my part I am satisfied with it just where it is; where the men who gave it to us have located it. I do not think we are gaining any thing by it; but we are teaching our people to seek after the shadow rather than the substance. If we could conceive some measure by which our members in Congress could be emancipated from the influence of Eastern ideas about matters of trade and commerce, it might be of some importance and use; but I do not believe in this ornamental work of instructing them about the Capital. For that reason I call for the ayes and noes, for the purpose of recording my vote against it, if I be the only one in the House who does so."

To this William Mills of Dubuque responded that a glance at a map of the United States would indicate to every reflective mind that, "on the same principles of prudence and wisdom that characterize us in other matters," the location of the national capital must soon be changed. "When we look at counties and States who seek a central position for their county seats and Capitals," he said, "why should we apply a different rule in the location of

our National Capital? Why should the people of the West, especially those on the Pacific Slope, be obliged to travel away to the District of Columbia, merely because our forefathers had selected that point? I can see no reason why that should be so, only this: that we should continue our location of idols where our fathers built them, whether it be far from us or not, and whether modern improvements require a change or not. If this capital is ever to be changed, the true policy is not to increase the expenditures of money in the District of Columbia. It is evident from the public sentiment throughout the country, that the people will demand a change before long. Now, while I would not be in favor of a law restricting them from necessary improvements, I would be in favor of preventing any permanent expenditure of the public money. I hope the resolution will be adopted."

M. E. Cutts of Oskaloosa heartily concurred with Mr. Irish in wishing that "our representatives may be removed from the influence of the politicians of the East; and that our legislation may cease to be controlled by eastern policy and eastern men", but he thought that "one good way of doing that is to remove the place of legislation from the East to the West and surround the Capital with western men and western ideas."

Mr. Irish suggested that a better method would be to "remove these unworthy Representatives of the West." If Iowa would "send men to Congress



who have the interests of their constituents at heart, no danger can result from any blandishments that may surround them. I agree with the gentleman from Mahaska partially. Let us seek men who are true to the interests of the people they represent, and then you need not put your Capital on wheels, and bring it out West, when you want Western interests served; take it South, when you want Southern interests served; and back East, when you want Eastern interests served; and in the coming time we will not be harassed by having a peripatetic Capital."

"The trouble with the gentleman", replied Mr. Cutts, "is, that he was not elected to Congress in the Fourth District. I sympathize with him heartily. Though I differ with him as to the effect that that defeat had upon the country, yet I say to him, that I would sympathize with him any time."

"There is something more melancholy, at least to the people, than my defeat," retorted Mr. Irish, "and that was the success of the gentleman who beat me."

Here the debate ended. The resolution was adopted by a vote of eighty-five to three. The Senate concurred in the House amendment and the joint resolution was duly approved by the Governor.

In the meantime the intrepid John A. Logan had organized a bloc of seventy-four members of the national House of Representatives who were

pledged to vote for capital removal. On January 22, 1870, the House went into Committee of the Whole, with George W. McCrary of Iowa in the chair, to consider the question. It was on this occasion that Mr. Logan made his strongest plea for putting the national capital "on wheels" in a speech filling twenty columns in the *Congressional Globe*. Nothing came of it.

During a debate in the Senate upon the appropriation of a quarter of a million dollars for the extension of the capitol grounds in Washington, James Harlan called for the reading of the resolutions adopted by the Iowa legislature on that subject and then launched into an argument for capital removal. He was eloquently supported by Richard Yates, but when the vote on the appropriation was counted only ten Senators cast their ballot against it. James Harlan and James B. Howell of Iowa were among the dissenters. A vote in the House on a similar provision recorded five of the six Iowa Representatives among the nays.

The Iowa Republican State Convention which met in Des Moines in August, 1870, adopted a resolution in favor of removing the national capital to the Mississippi Valley and instructing Iowa Congressmen "not to vote one dollar for the erection of any new buildings, nor the purchase of any additional grounds at Washington City." There was not a dissenting vote against the resolution.

In October, 1870, a second national capital re-

removal convention was held in Cincinnati. Again Governor Merrill responded by appointing a strong delegation of twenty-four prominent men of the State, including Ralph P. Lowe, Benjamin F. Gue, Charles Beardsley, Samuel J. Kirkwood, George F. Magoun, Hoyt Sherman, and M. L. McPherson. Only four of them attended the convention, however, and the delegations from other States were similarly depleted. The enthusiasm for capital removal seemed to be ebbing. A resolution that further agitation on the question was "mischievous, uncalled for, and detrimental to the best interests of the nation" lacked only two votes of being adopted.

In Congress a final stand was made by the advocates of capital removal during the winter of 1871. All of the Iowa Representatives remained steadfast in opposition to appropriations for capital improvement in Washington, but neither Mr. Harlan nor Mr. Howell offered any objections in the Senate. The policy of erecting new buildings in Washington was definitely adopted and with that action the agitation for capital removal subsided. While hope lingered for some time in the western mind, and even to-day the suggestion of removing the seat of the national government to the Mississippi Valley meets a favorable response, the "scheme to put the capital on wheels" has not been seriously advocated since the early seventies.

J. A. SWISHER



## Comment by the Editor

### THE IMPORTANCE OF SPORT

Recreation is as old as the race. Since the first sustained effort, relaxation has been essential in the life of man. Work requires thought, concentration, and reason — the highest mental processes — while modern social relations demand more self-restraint and repression of natural impulses than ever before in the evolution of civilization. The most effective relief from the strain of these strenuous times is found in various kinds of sport.

It was ever so. Juvenal's satirical phrase "bread and games" is not paradoxical. Games in a broad sense have always held a prominent place in human activities. Play is as natural as work.

Organized sport seems to be concomitant with periods of great mental achievement. The Olympic games reached their climax in the golden age of Greece; the Colosseum and the Circus Maximus were imposing monuments to the athletes of Rome in the height of her glory; while the development of sport in America has been contemporaneous with the most complex years in the history of this nation. Nervous stress may be measured, apparently, in terms of recreation.

The rise of sport in the United States is a phe-

phenomenon of the last half century. Frederic L. Paxson thinks that the passing of the frontier was responsible for it. "The free lands were used up. The cow country rose and fell. The social safety valve was screwed down." There was no explosion because a new safety valve in the form of sport was discovered. Games were substituted for the conquest of a continent to fulfill the demands of innate physical vigor.

Whatever the causes of the renaissance of sport in America, the fact is evident. Wholesale interest and participation in organized sport began between the years 1876 and 1893. That was the period of sore muscles in American history. The widespread enthusiasm for games from the time of the centennial in Philadelphia to the world's fair in Chicago has steadily expanded, with the result that the organization and control of nearly every form of sport has become quasi-national. The sporting page in the daily press — a form of recognition accorded to few other activities — is a gauge of public interest and perhaps a test of the importance of games.

Some of the recent changes in national character and opinion may be attributed, in part at least, to the prevalence and the spirit of sport. Sheer force of public disapproval has driven frauds and quacks from the advertising pages of reputable journals; moral indifference to shady political and commercial methods has given way to real concern for public honesty; and general contempt has forced

recalcitrant crooks to comply with the rules. The emphasis upon clean sport has led to cleaner living. And who shall say that the women who took up tennis and bicycling did not at the same time make a great stride toward real emancipation?

J. E. B.



# The **PALIMPSEST**

JUNE 1923

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THE EDITOR

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## THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE

The PALIMPSEST, issued monthly by the State Historical Society of Iowa, is devoted to the dissemination of Iowa History. Supplementing the other publications of this Society, it aims to present the materials of Iowa History in a form that is attractive and a style that is popular in the best sense—to the end that the story of our Commonwealth may be more widely read and cherished.

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH

*Superintendent*

## THE MEANING OF PALIMPSESTS

In early times palimpsests were parchments or other materials from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete; and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

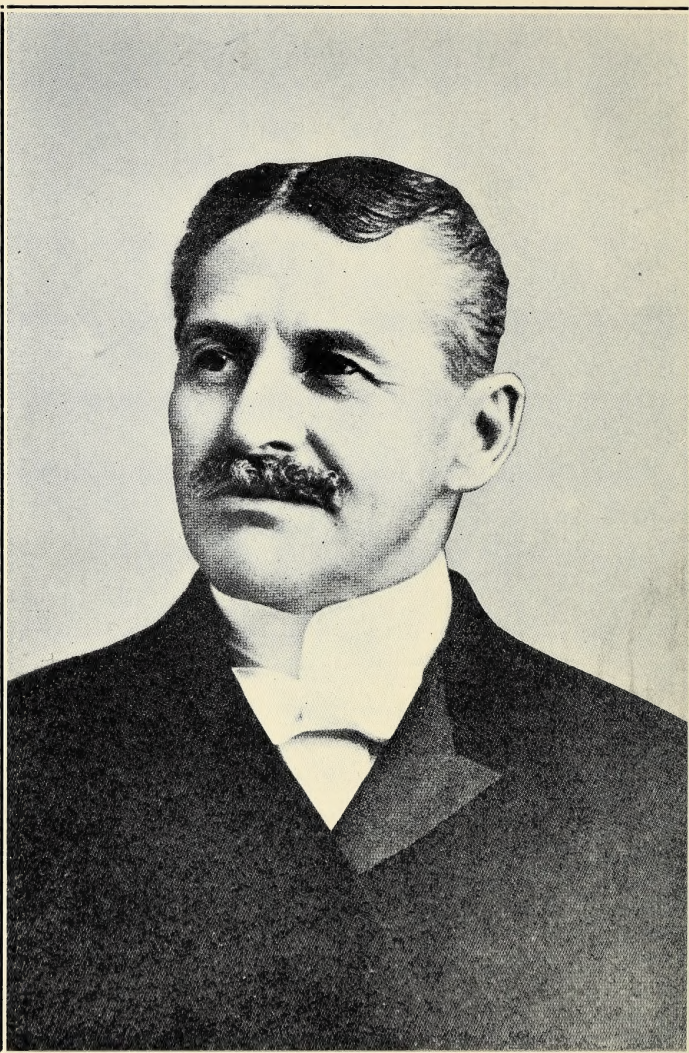
The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the records of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

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ROBERT J. BURDETTE

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## **"Bob" Burdette—Humorist**

There is scarcely a city or even a rural community in the United States that does not cherish memories of "Bob" Burdette — memories that bring a smile to the lips and warmth to the heart. Some people, far and near, can still recall, through the mists of nearly fifty years, the eagerness with which they used to await their copies of the Burlington *Hawk-Eye* which contained his breezy paragraphs. Many more there are who remember him as the lecturer who broadcast smiles and sunshine from a thousand platforms, or, in later years, as the preacher who expounded the gospel in terms of good cheer and human brotherhood.

Editor, jester, lecturer, poet, and preacher — "Bob" Burdette trod the primrose path of public favor through two generations. James Whitcomb Riley said his success was due to his "genius for loving." His wife is inclined to emphasize his mag-



netic personality. Perhaps his habit of doing his best in everything he undertook was also partly responsible. Whatever the factors may have been, few men have earned a finer reputation for wholesome humor and steadfast optimism.

Robert J. Burdette began his versatile career of three score years and ten in Greene County, Pennsylvania, in 1844. It was a county, he used to say, "just large enough for a man to get born in." At the age of two he began his westward migration, accompanied by his parents. "I was born in Pennsylvania, weaned in Ohio, kidnapped by Illinois, adopted by Iowa, and married to California", he summarized the stages in his life. "I never, positively never, did anything I was ashamed of while I remained in my native State. I never swore; I never lied; I never stole anything; I never went to a circus; I never ran away from Sunday School; I didn't go out at night; I didn't play billiards nor go to horse races. Good boy that I was, I stayed at home and entertained the family. No man, I ween, ever lived a purer life than I did while I lived in Pennsylvania."

Before coming to Iowa in 1874, where he really established his reputation as a humorist, Mr. Burdette had reached a masterful maturity through the wide experience of his varied early life. In 1861, at the age of sixteen, he graduated from the Peoria, Illinois, high school. His commencement essay, which he later said "foreshadowed my subsequent



career as a statesman”, was entitled “The Press and the Ballot Box”. “I have preserved that rather remarkable state paper. Would you like to see it? For a hundred thousand dollars you may. I sometimes read it myself. It mitigates the horror of approaching death.”

On August 4, 1862, just five days after he was eighteen, he enlisted in the Forty-seventh Illinois Volunteer Infantry. The recruiting officer unenthusiastically pointed to the standard of military height, “a pine stick standing out from the wall in rigid uncompromising insistence, five feet three inches from the floor.” As Burdette walked toward it he “could see it slide up, until it seemed to lift itself seven feet above my ambitious head. If I could have kept up the stretching strain I put on every longitudinal muscle in my body in that minute of fate, I would have been as tall as Abraham Lincoln by the close of the war. As it was, when I stepped under that Rhadamantine rod, I felt my scalplock, which was very likely standing on end with apprehension, brush lightly against it.” He was accepted and served to the end of the war. Though he “fought through more than a score of battles”, received honorable mention for bravery in the siege of Vicksburg, and “romped through more than a hundred frolics”, he never saw the inside of a hospital and never lost a day off duty on account of sickness.

Back from the war he taught school near Peoria where the custom was “to go to bed at sunset and

get up some time in the night", as though "the sun did not know when to start the day". It might be true, he thought, that "the early bird caught the worm, but what consolation is that to the worm? Had he stayed in bed later he would not have been caught."

After three months of teaching he was employed a short time as a clerk in a crockery store, "without fatality to dish or human". Then for several months he "was in the railway service when there really wasn't any such thing", working in the capacity of a mail clerk on a short run from Peoria to Logansport, Illinois.

In 1868 he entered Cooper Institute in New York for the purpose of studying art and with the avowed intention of "painting a great historic painting that was to cover a canvas as big as the side of a barn with buckets of paint and a name made famous signed in the corner". But New York did not seem to want any "great artist", so the young art student earned a scanty living writing visiting cards and sent remarkably vivid letters back home to the *Peoria Transcript*.

New York, he wrote, was a "delightful old mixed up place, where every avenue you take loses itself in a maze of entanglements, where the stranger, after securing full and definite instructions from a policeman who can speak English, buttons up his coat and resolutely starts out to somewhere, and after turning the first two corners as per directions, finds him



self back at the same identical corner and policeman he started from; where the streets take a malicious delight in leading the wayfarer up against a dead wall or out to some wharf; where everything is so crooked that were a man to walk rapidly enough he could almost see himself going down another street.”

At that time U. S. Grant was very much in the public eye, and Burdette tells in a letter of seeing “the distinguished smoker” airing himself on Broadway. “General Grant left this city today”, he wrote. “The closeness with which he has been watched during his stay, precludes any possibility of his having stolen anything.”

During Burdette’s sojourn in New York he went one Sunday evening to hear Henry Ward Beecher preach. “After reaching Brooklyn”, he explained, “you have only to follow the crowds that you see converging from all directions to a common center. That center is Plymouth Church.” Knowing that the congregation assembled early he thought he would stroll past the edifice so as to be sure of its exact location before going there in the evening. What was his surprise “to discover a crowd of nearly two hundred people collected on the sidewalk and in the street in front of the closed gates of the church yard, standing patiently there in the midst of a driving snow storm.” Inside the church the “long row of benches around the gallery was densely crowded with tourists, interlopers and plebeians long before the pews began to fill. I was amazed



when an energetic usher ordered us to sit closer together, and actually got about a dozen more worshippers seated. Scarcely had we got settled into breathing postures again, when the same usher, inexorable as a street car conductor, packed us still closer and wedged in another delegation, and there we sat, our arms hanging down before us, hands solemnly clasped on our knees, jammed and pressed so tightly together, wrought into such intimate contact, that I could almost tell what my neighbor was thinking about, and had the usher trod on the corns of the man at the end of the seat, I believe all the rest of us would have 'hollered.' "

Burdette's New York letters shaped the way to his newspaper career. After a thrilling adventure as a member of a filibustering expedition to Cuba where he, "the smallest man on the boat", was wounded by the Spaniards "the first time they fired", he returned to Peoria in 1869 and took a position as telegraph editor on the *Transcript*. By the end of the year he had become city editor and his wit dominated the local page. But one day the editor of the paper announced that when he wanted anything funny in his paper he would write it himself. So Mr. Burdette transferred his services, and later his capital, to the ill-starred Peoria *Review*. When the *Review* went out of business in 1874 about all that was left of Burdette's fortune was his sense of humor, a ticket to Burlington, and a contract to join the editorial staff of the Burlington *Hawk-Eye*.

For several years “Bob” Burdette was connected with the *Hawk-Eye*, first as city editor, then as managing editor, and, after he began lecturing, as special correspondent. He found the *Hawk-Eye* a sedate, conservative old newspaper with a short subscription list, and he left it one of the liveliest, most influential papers in Iowa and with readers in every State in the Union. The increased circulation was chiefly due to Mr. Burdette’s crisp paragraphs touching politics and public life, each with its own whimsical coloring; his shrewd and logical editorials; and his domestic sketches in which his penchant for burlesque, parody, punning, exaggeration, and ludicrous situations was given full play. He came to be known far and wide as “the Burlington Hawk-Eye man”.

Charles Beardsley, the editor-in-chief, believed that all printed mirth was unseemly and he chafed and fumed at the city editor’s stuff. There was news enough in town without printing nonsense he insisted. But the business office showed him subscription figures that sent Mr. Beardsley back to his wonted editorials, Bob continued to print his genial foolery, and all Burlington was happy. What did anyone on West Hill care that a big fire was covered in a paragraph, so long as there was a column recounting the experiences of Mr. Middlerib? Nobody missed a full report of the political rally at South Hill Square if “the Hawk-Eye man” had published the latest adventures of Old Bilderback and Master Bilderback.

Middlerib and the Bilderbacks were creatures of Burdette's imagination who bore the brunt of his satirical witticisms. They possessed many of the habits and foibles to which human nature is heir, and their traits of character struck the chord of common experience.

“ ‘No’, said Mr. Bilderback who couldn’t find his hat, ‘it wasn’t.’ ” He had put it there last night just before he went to bed and someone had moved it. Whereupon the family scattered for the usual morning search. “Mrs. Bilderback looked in all the closets with the air of John Rogers going to the stake, and then she went into an old chest, that had the furs and things put away in it, and was opened twice a year, except when Mr. Bilderback’s hat was lost, which occurred on an average three times a day. She shook pepper or fine cut tobacco or camphor out of everything she picked up, and varied her search by the most extraordinary sneezes that ever issued from human throat”. Miss Bilderback confined her search to the “uncut pages of the last *Scribner*, which she carefully cut and looked into, with an eager scrutiny that told how intensely interested she was in finding that hat. She never varied her method of search, save when the approaching footsteps of her father warned her that he was swinging on his erratic eccentric in that direction, when she hid the magazine, and picking up the corner of the piano cover looked under that article with a sweet air”.

Mr. Bilderback himself was a composite system



of investigation. “He raged through the sitting-room like a hurricane; he looked under every chair in that room, and then upset them all to see if he mightn’t possibly have overlooked the hat. Then he looked on all the brackets in the parlor, and behind the window curtains, and kicked over the ottoman to look for a hat that he couldn’t have squeezed under a wash-tub. And he kept up a running commentary all the time, which served no purpose except to warn his family when he was coming and give them time to prepare. He looked into the clock and left it stopped and standing crooked. And he would like to know who touched that hat. He looked into his daughter’s work-box, a sweet little shell that ‘George’ gave her, and he emptied it out on the table and wondered what such trumpery was for, and who in thunder hid his hat. ‘It must be hid,’ he said, peering down with a dark, suspicious look into an odor bottle somewhat larger than a thimble, ‘for it couldn’t have got so completely out of sight by accident.’ If people wouldn’t meddle with his things, he howled, for the benefit of Mrs. Bilderback, whom he heard sneezing as he went past the closet door, he would always know just where to find them, because (looking gloomily behind the kitchen wood box) he always had one place to put all his things (and he took off the lid of the spice-box), and kept them there. He glared savagely out of the door, in hopes of seeing his hopeful son, but that youthful strategist was out of sight behind his intrenchments. Mr.

Bilderback wrathfully resumed his search, and roared, for his daughter's benefit, that he would spend every cent he had intended to lay out for winter bonnets, in new hats for himself, and then maybe he might be able to find one when he wanted it. Then he opened the door of the oven and looked darkly in, turned all the clothes out of the wash-basket, and strewed them around, wondering '*who* had hid that hat?' And he pulled the clothes-line off its nail, and got down on his hands and knees to look behind the refrigerator, and wondered '*who had* hid that hat;' and then he climbed on the back of a chair to look on the top shelf of the cupboard, and sneezed around among old wide-mouthed bottles and pungent paper parcels, and wondered in muffled wrath '*who had hid* that hat?' And he went down into the cellar and roamed around among rows of stone jars covered with plates and tied up with brown paper, and smelling of pickles and things in all stages of progress; every one of which he looked into, and how he did wonder '*who had hid that* hat.' And he looked into dark corners and swore when he jammed his head against the corners of swinging shelves, and felt along those shelves and run his fingers into all sorts of bowls, containing all sorts of greasy and sticky stuff, and thumped his head against hams hanging from the rafters, at which he swore anew, and he peered into and felt around in barrels which seemed to have nothing in them but cobwebs and nails; shook boxes which were prolific



in dust and startling in rats, and he wondered ‘who had hid that *hat*?’

“And just then loud whoops and shouts came from up stairs, announcing that ‘here it was.’ And old Bilderback went up stairs growling, because the person who hid it hadn’t brought it out before, and saw the entire family pointing out into the back yard, where the hat surmounted Mr. Bilderback’s cane, which was leaning against the fence, ‘just where you left it, pa,’ Miss Bilderback explained, ‘when we called you in to supper, and it has been out there all night.’ And Mr. Bilderback, evidently restraining, by a violent effort, an intense desire to bless his daughter with the cane, remarked with a mysterious manner, that ‘it was mighty singular,’ and putting on his hat, he strode away with great dignity; leaving his wife and daughter to re-arrange the house.”

On another occasion the Middlerib family went on a picnic. “Mr. M. went out and looked at the sky, and noted the direction of the wind, and watched the movements of the chimney swallows with a critical and scientific eye, and came in and announced that it would not rain for five days, and they would have the picnic just two days before the rain. And from the hour of that announcement the Middlerib family and their invited relations did nothing but bake, and roast, and stew, and iron clothes, and declare they were tired to death and would be glad when it was all over and done with.”



On the morning of the picnic the sky was overcast and the sun had "a terribly wild and dissipated look" which was not encouraging. "There is no scene in all this wide world of pathos more pathetic than a group of anxious mortals, on the morn of a picnic, trying to delude each other into the belief that when the sky is covered with heavy black clouds, 800 feet thick, and a damp scud is driving through the air, and the sun is only half visible occasionally through a thin cloud that is waiting to be patched up to the standard thickness and density, it is going to be a very fine day indeed. So the Middle-ribs looked at the coppery old sun, and the dismal clouds, and tried to look cheerful, and said encouragingly that 'Oh, it never rained when the clouds came up that way;' and, 'See, it is all clear over in the east;' and, 'It often rains very heavily in town when there doesn't a drop of water fall at Prospect Hill.' And thus, with many encouraging remarks of similar import, they awaited the gathering of the party, and the human beings finally climbed into one wagon, put the baskets and the boys in the other, and drove away, giggling and howling with well dissembled glee.

"The happy party, although they well knew that it would not rain, had taken the precaution nevertheless to take a large assortment of shawls and umbrellas. They were a quarter of a mile from town when it began to thunder some, but as it didn't thunder in the direction of Prospect Hill, distant

some three miles, they went on, confident that it wasn't raining, and wouldn't, and couldn't rain at Prospect Hill. They were half a mile from town when the cloud that all the rest of the clouds had been waiting for came up and remorselessly sat down on the last, solitary lingering patch of blue that broke the monotony of the leaden sky, but the party pressed on, confident that they would find blue sky when they got to Prospect Hill. They were a mile from town when old Aquarius pulled the bottom out of the rain wagon and began the entertainment. It was a grand success. The curtain hadn't been up ten minutes before all the standing room in the house was taken up and the box office was closed. The Middlerib party having gone early, and secured front seats, were able to see everything. They expressed their pleasure by loud shrieks, and howls, and wails. They tore umbrellas, that had been furtively placed in the wagon, out of their lurking places, and shot them up with such abruptness that the hats in the wagon were knocked out into the road. Then the wagon stopped and people crawled out and waded around after hats, and came piling back into the wagon, with their feet loaded with mud. The umbrellas got into each other's way, and from the points of the ribs streams of dirty water trickled down shuddering backs, and stained immaculate dresses, and took the independence out of glossy shirt fronts. And the picnic party turned homeward, but still the Middleribs did not lose heart.

They smiled through their tears, and Miss Middle-rib, beautiful in her grief, still advocated going on and having the picnic in a barn, and wept when they refused her. It rained harder every rod of the way back.

“Then the clouds broke, and then sun came out, and smiling nature stood around looking as pleasant as though it had never played a mean trick on a happy picnic party in its life; and the Middleribs hung themselves out in the sun to dry, and tried to play croquet in the wet grass, and kept up their spirits as well as they knew how, and were not cross if they did get wet. If smiling nature had only given them a show, or even half a chance, they would have got along all right. They were bound to have the picnic party anyhow, so they kept all the relations at the house, and when dinner time came, the grass was dry and they set the table out under the trees and made it look as picnicky as possible. It clouded up a little when they were setting the table, but nobody thought it looked very threatening. The soaked things had been dried as carefully as possible, and the table looked beautiful when they gathered around it. And just about the time they got their plates filled and declared that they were glad they came back, and that this was ever so much better than Prospect Hill, a forty acre cloud came and stood right over the table, and then and there went all to pieces.

“The pleasure-seekers grabbed whatever they



could reach and broke for the house, uttering wild shrieks of dismay. They crowded into the hall, which wasn't half big enough, and there they stood on each other's trains, and trod on each other's corns, and poured coffee down each other's backs, and jabbed forks into one another's arms. And when Uncle Steve, who had found Aunt Carrie's baby out under the deserted table, maintaining an unequal struggle with half of a huckle-berry pie and a whole thunder-storm, came tearing in with the hapless infant, and, dashing through the crowd, deposited it on top of a pile of hard-boiled eggs, Miss Middlerib fainted, and the youngest gentleman cousin was driven into a spasm of jealousy because he couldn't walk over a row of cold meats and lobster salad to get to her, and had to endure the misery of seeing the oldest and ugliest bachelor uncle carry her drooping form to a sofa, and lay her down tenderly, with her classic head in a nest of cream tarts, and her dainty feet on Sadie's Jenny Lind cake. And when Mrs. Middlerib looked out of the window, and saw the dog Heedle with his fore paws in the lemonade bucket, growling at Cousin John, who was trying to drive him out of it, she expressed a willingness to die right there. And when they were startled by some unearthly sounds and muffled shrieks, that even rose above the human babel in the hall, and found that the cat had got its poor head jammed tighter than wax in the mouth of the jar that contained the cream, everybody just sat on the plate of

things nearest him, and gasped, 'What next?' while Cousin David lifted cat and jar by the tail of the former, and carried them out to be broken apart. And when old Mr. Rubelkins lost his teeth in the coffee pot, half the people in the hall began to lose heart, and one discouraged young cousin said he half wished that they had put the picnic off a day. And finally, when the uproar was at its height, the door-bell rang, and the aunt nearest the door opened it, and there stood the Hon. Mrs. J. C. P. R. Le von Blatheringford and her daughter, the richest and most stylish people in the neighborhood, arrayed like fashion-plates making their first formal call. While they stood gazing in mute bewilderment at the scene of ruin and devastation and chaos before them, Mrs. Middlerib just got behind the door and pounded her head against the wall''. That was the blow that finished the picnic.

"Bob" Burdette's daily column of "Hawkeyetems" was replete with ludicrous events, inexcusable puns, and fantastic hyperboles, as the following samples will indicate.

"It's the fashionable thing among Burlington youngsters, now-a-days, to have the mumps, and they are awfully puffed about it, too."

"Talk about your centennial trophies. A man on THE HAWK-EYE has a nick that was knocked in George Washington's hatchet when he hit it on a nail in the front fence. We are the man, but our modesty will not permit us to say so."



“A little boy on West Hill, in some inscrutable manner obtained possession of a Swedish primer, last night about eight o’clock, and before the af-frighted mother could snatch the dangerous toy from his grasp he had attempted to pronounce one of the long words and had fractured his little jaw in three places.”

“Art has its votaries even amid the untaught children of the wilderness. A few days ago a savage Indian painted his own face, went into an emigrant wagon that was sketched, by himself, out on the prairie after dark, and drew a woman from under the canvas and sculptor.”

“A spirited race between an old man and a young calf yesterday morning, made a pleasant episode for Tenth street, out on South Hill. The calf got away with the patriarch in a way that was painful. He pulled the old gent down on his knees on a loose plank in the crossing, tore his trousers and ruined his temper and broke some of the commandments.”

The “Hawk-Eye man” delighted in poking fun at Burlington peculiarities. An old cutter stranded on South Hill by some thaw or Hallowe’en prank was made famous from one end of the land to the other as the “Red Sleigh on Maple Street”. A low-lying block, tenanted by two or three unkempt squatter families with numerous dogs and uncared-for children, had been a problem and vexation for years. Burdette christened the place Happy Hollow and reported the social life of the inhabitants in great de-



tail. One day a horse ran away with a light delivery wagon on Angular Street, "but he got so dizzy and bewildered trying to follow the course of the way, that he sat down on the sidewalk and cried, from sheer vexation."

Prohibition was a prominent issue in Burlington in 1874, and the "wets" contended that the closing of the saloons would hurt business. Burdette seized upon the argument and applied it on all sorts of occasions. When the poorhouse burned one of the paupers, indignant at being assigned quarters in an out-building, crossed the river and became "a happy inmate" of an Illinois poorhouse. "Thus fanaticism and religious oppression continue to drive capital out of Burlington", concluded the city editor.

"Bob" Burdette launched his first lecture "on the broad ocean of human hearts and ears" at Keokuk in December, 1876. He had "about nine and a half pounds of manuscript" on the subject of "The Rise and Fall of the Mustache" and did not miss a word or leave out a line. It took two hours and fifteen minutes to deliver that lecture and when he had finished he "hadn't enough voice left to ask for a glass of water". But the audience liked his humor and that winter he and his lecture were much in demand.

Those were the palmy days of the lyceum when P. T. Barnum, Henry Ward Beecher, Joaquin Miller, Wendell Phillips, Henry W. Shaw, "Bill" Nye, and Eugene Field were at the height of their fame on the platform. During the winter of 1877-1878 Mr. Bur-

dette lectured under the direction of the Redpath Lyceum Bureau. From that time the platform claimed more and more of his attention, but for several years he served the *Hawk-Eye* as special correspondent. The “Roaming Robert” letters, containing some of the finest things he ever wrote, were full of philosophy, humor, and pathos all blended in happy harmony by his frolicsome pen. They told with characteristic cleverness of his experiences in all parts of the country, of the people he met, of the trains he traveled on and those he missed, of the audiences he addressed, and of the tribulations he encountered.

In 1880 he left Burlington in the vain hope that his wife's health would be improved and his letters to the *Hawk-Eye* ceased, though he wrote for the *Brooklyn Eagle* for several years. He spent the summers at some secluded place recuperating from the strain of the lyceum season. It was while he was camping in the woods in Warren County, Pennsylvania, that he received his “call” to the ministry. “The people came to me and said they had no pastor, would I preach for them? I would and did.”

Asked one time why he was a Baptist, he replied that he inherited his religious faith. “I love the Universalists and the Russians, I love the Congregationalists and Prussians and Methodists; I love the Presbyterians and the English; but I was born a Baptist and an American, and that settles it.”

During the lecture season for a number of years



he preached every Sunday, "from Dan to Beersheba". In 1898 he became supply minister of the First Presbyterian Church of Pasadena, California, and when the Temple Baptist Church of Los Angeles was organized in 1903 he was selected as pastor, a position he occupied until his death in 1914.

The transition from professional humorist to preacher extended over a period of eighteen years. He emphatically denied that he had wearied of the "strenuous life of the lecture field and sought ease in the pastorate". In these days of intellectual alertness, he said, "the man who seeks the pastorate for a vacation will find far more quiet and ease and meditative restfulness in falling down stairs with a kitchen stove or dodging automobiles on racing day."

While he studiously avoided telling funny stories in the pulpit, his sermons were filled with richly humorous philosophy. "Great things don't amount to much", he declared. "Life is made up of little things. I have known men who were so great they were of no account. You have seen trees so big you could not tie a horse to them. I have heard preachers who knew so much you could not understand a word they said, and once in a while you go into a house where they have a Bible so big they never read it. It is easier to be great than it is to be humble." He always maintained that "humor is but the garment of truth."

SHERMAN J. McNALLY



## Grasshopper Times

Northwestern Iowa has suffered much from the grasshoppers. The ravages of the Rocky Mountain locusts were almost continuous in O'Brien County from 1873 until 1879, though the devastation was much worse in some summers than in others. Thomas Barry, a victim of their invasions, relates his personal experiences in the following pages.

'Tis well I remember that beautiful June day when our future — which looked so bright — was so quickly blasted by an invasion of grasshoppers. It was Sunday morning: six of my neighbors had called for me to go with them to Hospers to attend church. There was no definite road, so we simply headed northwest and avoided the deepest slews. The sun was well up in the cloudless blue sky, causing the drops of dew to shine in the soft green grass mottled with prairie flowers. The tall grass by the side of the slew nodded to us as the wind blew over it. Meadow larks, like an orchestra of flutes, greeted us with their jubilant song from the tiptop of the tallest weeds as they accompanied us for long stretches. Then flashing the black crescents on their breasts, they flew away and others took up the relay with as clear a note.

The heavy sweet smell of bluejoint which filled the

air so dulled my senses that the German conversation of my companions seemed far away. A hearty laugh from the crowd brought me back to their presence, and turning to them I said, "Isn't this wonderful?" They looked at me rather blankly so I hesitated a little and ventured, "Schön, sehr schön, nicht wahr?" and spread my arms over the land. They all assented, "Ja", but one settler who had seen June prairies before edged up more closely and said, "Ja, schön, but you can't eat it." He nodded his head in emphasis and limped back to his place in the wagon.

When about half way to Hospers a large black cloud suddenly appeared high in the west from which came an ominous sound. The apparition moved directly toward us, its dark appearance became more and more terrifying, and the sound changed to a deep hum. At first we thought a cyclone was upon us. The oxen stopped and we all stared at each other mystified. "Der jüngste Tag", one man shouted and began to pray. The cloud broadened out and settled lower as it drew near: the noise became deafening. When it was directly over us it looked like a heavy storm of black flakes, the dark particles singling out and becoming more defined in shape as they descended. We heard the buzzing; we saw the shining wings, the long bodies, the legs. The grasshoppers — the scourge of the prairie — were upon us.

As Mike Roeder lashed his whip and turned the

oxen toward home, we nodded approval. He urged the animals into their swiftest gait — a wabby trot. When they breathed loudly, he drew them into a slow, steady walk. The men spoke little: gloom settled upon the group. Again the meadow larks flew with us and plaintively sang, "O, do not give up hope."

When we pulled into my yard, the shiny brown pests already covered my patch of sod corn and the field of wheat. The entire garden was a dark moving mass and the tender young cottonwoods were brown. I was greatly relieved at the apparent composure of my wife as I saw her cutting down the clothes line. She had recovered from her fright and suggested that by swinging a rope we might be able to save some wheat. I figured it a useless procedure but we tied together all the rope we could find and, each taking an end, we swung it back and forth most of the day. We saved enough wheat for seed.

I do not think anyone but the old settlers themselves can ever realize the depredations caused by the hoppers. In O'Brien and surrounding counties they ate everything before them — small grain, corn, vegetables, bark and leaves of trees, the clothes on the line, and the tender shoots of grass that grew near the ground on the prairie. Some farmers cut the unripened grain. By harvest time there was little left to cut.

The settlers in northwest Iowa were for the most part people of limited means who had taken advan-



tage of the homestead or preëmption laws. Long and hard they had labored in anticipation of better times. They had endured all of the hardships and privations of pioneer life in the hope of realizing a substantial reward in the years of prosperity that were to follow. They had come into the new country practically empty-handed, depending entirely upon the crops from year to year: there was no surplus for emergencies. The early summer of seventy-three held out big promises. Implements were purchased, new granaries built, and lightning rod agents did a thriving business — on credit. The harvest would pay for it all. And then came the grasshoppers. To make matters worse a financial panic broke over the country in September.

The approach of winter found many of the farmers in dire need of clothing, fuel, and food. A convention was held in Fort Dodge and an appeal was made for donations to relieve the destitute in the stricken region. People from all parts of the country responded generously, and "grasshopper parties" for the benefit of the homesteaders became something of a fad.

When the General Assembly convened in January, Governor C. C. Carpenter recommended that the needs of the grasshopper victims should be investigated and some means provided for their relief. A legislative committee visited Sioux, O'Brien, and Osceola counties, met and interviewed hundreds of settlers, and found our local authorities totally un-

able to meet the situation. The shortage of seed grain was especially serious. Before the end of February a bill was passed which appropriated \$50,000 "for the purpose of furnishing the destitute in northwestern Iowa, suffering in consequence of the grasshopper raid of the summer of 1873, with such seed, grain, and vegetables as may be deemed necessary". Over \$36,000 of this money was used that spring and nearly two thousand people were aided. I did not take advantage of any of the relief that was offered because I had managed to save some seed and we were able to buy enough food and clothing.

During the late summer and early fall the hoppers had deposited cells of eggs in countless numbers in the cultivated land. Each cell contained about thirty eggs and was covered with a little soil. In the spring the eggs hatched and the ground seemed alive with queer little insects about one-fourth of an inch in length and possessing ravenous appetites. They seemed to be instinctively attracted toward the fields where the tender shoots of grain were making their appearance. The first sign of their ravages was a narrow strip along the side of a field where the grain or corn was missing. At first it was usually attributed to a balk in sowing but as it grew wider day by day the cause was soon apparent.

We experimented with every means conceivable to exterminate the pests. Smudging, burning the prairie, burning tar, digging ditches, using kerosene,



and harrowing the land infested with eggs were all tried with little success.

Again there was no harvest. Many settlers left the country disheartened and discouraged. Some did not wait to dispose of their land but loaded up and left, others sold for what they could get, while those who remained hoped for the next year. Many were in a pitiful condition. I sold our old home in Massachusetts and was saved some of the privations my neighbors suffered. Sharks and swindlers were plentiful and took advantage of the needy settlers by offering mortgages at high rates of interest — frequently charging two and one-half per cent a month. Only the coarsest food was available.

Every spring a new horde of grasshoppers was hatched. They moulted and began to eat as soon as green vegetation appeared. At times we were visited by migratory swarms which would stay a while and then all fly off again in a favorable wind. A grasshopper flight has been likened to “an immense snow-storm, extending from the ground to a height at which our visual organs perceive them only as minute, darting scintillations, leaving the imagination to picture them indefinite distances beyond. . . . On the horizon they often appear as a dust tornado, riding upon the wind like an ominous hail-storm, eddying and whirling about like the wild, dead leaves in an autumn storm”. When a change of temperature was encountered or a storm approached the grasshoppers descended. In alighting,



they circled in myriads about you, beating against everything animate or inanimate, driving into open doors and windows, heaping about your feet and around your buildings, while their jaws were constantly at work biting and testing all things in seeking what they could devour. Amid the incessant buzz that such a flight produced and in the presence of the inevitable destruction going on everywhere, one was bewildered and awed at the collective power of the ravaging host.

The noise made by one of the vast swarms of migratory grasshoppers when they were engaged in their work of destruction was much the same as the low crackling and rasping sound of a prairie fire swept along before a brisk wind — and the damage was scarcely less complete. The poet Robert Southey has vividly described the noise produced by a flight of these locusts :

Onward they come, a dark, continuous cloud  
Of congregated myriads numberless,  
The rushing of whose wings was as the sound  
Of a broad river, headlong in its course  
Plunged from a mountain summit, or the roar  
Of a wild ocean in the autumn storm,  
Shattering its billows on a shore of rocks!

Their flights sometimes darkened the sky and gave the settler an ominous feeling of disaster. One afternoon I was coming from Primghar in company with some neighbors when the largest and darkest cloud of hoppers we had ever seen passed between

us and the sun. The landscape grew hazy and things seemed so unreal we could hardly believe our senses. Daylight vanished, the air lost its warmth, and stars were visible. But after a while the cloud, carrying a tail like a comet, passed on. Sunlight and warmth returned, but it was several hours before we could shake off the terror that had seized us.

People in the East have often smiled incredulously at our statements that the grasshoppers stopped the trains on the railroads. At times the hordes of migratory hoppers accumulated on the track in such numbers that the oil from their crushed bodies made it necessary to sand the rails before the train could make the grade. J. M. Brainard, a prominent newspaper man in Iowa at that time, related that one day, well along in the afternoon, while he was on a trip to Council Bluffs, the train came to a standstill on the eastern slope of the divide near Arcadia. The sun was low and the air cool so that the hoppers had clustered upon the warm rails. The engineer was obliged to back the train and then make a rush for the top of the grade, liberally sanding the track as he did so. The same performance was repeated several times.

Some people, not living in the devastated section, treated the invasion as a joke. Much humorous literature was published concerning the hoppers. Menus were printed showing the variety of ways they could be served as food. It was said that really delicious soup could be made from the insects, while

fried in butter they tasted no better and no worse than shrimps. An agricultural house got out a card that had a picture of an enormous hopper sitting on a fence gazing at a field of wheat, and underneath were the words: "In this(s)wheat bye and bye". Fabulous yarns were told of the weird things the grasshoppers did.

As might be assumed, the loss of many harvests caused hard times. There was little money in circulation. Gopher pelts, on which there was a bounty of five cents, were a common medium of exchange. I used some cutlery that I received from Northampton in place of money. There was a good demand for my ware so I tramped the prairies with my sack on my back and visited surrounding towns.

The grasshoppers transformed the prairie into a barren world. Only the coarsest dry grass remained. Glossy brown hoppers shone everywhere in the sunlight, often piling up in their greed for any tender vegetation that might be found. I passed prairie shacks with the doors nailed shut; heard pitiful tales from settlers' families; saw hungry children, lean cattle, and a few cases of despair.

With all the desolation, hope never seemed to leave me. I was often lost in the fog and staid on the prairie all night. Thinking little of my health which I had been sent west to recover, I lay on the ground and watched the fog lift and the friendly stars come out. When dawn stole around me I arose, convinced that better times were in store for us.



In the summer of seventy-nine, when we all felt that we could not endure much longer, a favorable wind came before the hoppers had deposited their eggs. They arose and flew high seeking richer fields.

After the invasion was over, there was an influx of new settlers. Barbed wire did away with the free range and marked off our land like a checkerboard. A town sprang up near my place and the Chicago and Northwestern trains puffed through my pasture. A period of general prosperity began.

Of the seven old settlers who witnessed the coming of the grasshoppers on that memorable Sunday in June, 1873, six have gone to their reward. In the years that followed we found that we had the same ideals, though we spoke a different language.

JOSEPHINE BARRY DONOVAN

## Comment by the Editor

### THE AGE OF IOWA

In a political sense Iowa is young. Indeed, the political history of this Commonwealth is compassed in the span of a single lifetime: it is but a moment in the evolution of political institutions. A little less than eighty-five years have passed since the Territory of Iowa was established. It was scarcely more than three quarters of a century ago that the Territory became a State. Sixty-five years measure the time that Des Moines has been the capital city. All within the memory of men still living.

Physically, however, Iowa is as old as the rest of the world. This region existed ages before the advent of man. Most of the time it was under the sea while tiny clams laid down their shells to form the limestone and the marble for the future dwellings of a nobler race. There were also long periods when the ocean receded and the land appeared. Sometimes the country was a barren waste; again the climate was tropical when giant trees and enormous ferns grew in reptile-infested marshes; and only a hundred thousand years ago the surface of Iowa was covered with glaciers. The geological history of Iowa is measured by incomprehensible eons of time.

In the realm of human history Iowa has a venerable past. The mound builders flourished centuries before the civilization of the Pharaohs of Egypt. On the seventeenth of June it will have been just two hundred and fifty years since the white men first came to Iowa. Louis XIV was then dreaming of empire; Charles II maintained his uncertain seat upon the English throne; while Peter the Great was just learning to walk. The discovery of Iowa by Jacques Marquette and Louis Joliet occurred in 1673, nearly sixty years before George Washington was born and a century prior to the Boston Tea Party.

When William Penn was petitioning King Charles for an American land grant in 1680 Louis Hennepin was voyaging up the Mississippi along the eastern border of Iowa. Ten years before the siege and capture of the impregnable fortress of Louisburg by New England militia in 1745 the Sac and Fox Indians had defeated a French army in the Des Moines Valley. At the time Washington took the oath of office as President of the United States, Julien Dubuque was busily mining lead on Catfish Creek. Iowa is as old as the nation, and older.

J. E. B.







The

# PALIMPSEST

JULY 1923

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THE EDITOR

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## THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE

The PALIMPSEST, issued monthly by the State Historical Society of Iowa, is devoted to the dissemination of Iowa History. Supplementing the other publications of this Society, it aims to present the materials of Iowa History in a form that is attractive and a style that is popular in the best sense—to the end that the story of our Commonwealth may be more widely read and cherished.

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH

*Superintendent*

## THE MEANING OF PALIMPSESTS

In early times palimpsests were parchments or other materials from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete; and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the records of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

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# THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY JOHN ELY BRIGGS

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## Pointing the Way

Toward the Mississippi Valley the tide of world empire has been setting for three quarters of a century and is not even yet at its height. The financier may turn his eyes toward Wall Street or Threadneedle Street, the student may plan his pilgrimage to Cambridge or Leipzig, the artist may long for the inspiration afforded by the Louvre or the galleries of Florence, but the teeming millions of the overcrowded places of the world, with hands restless to do and hearts ready to dare, turn eager faces toward this great central basin of North America. In the center of this vast tract, midway between the mountain barriers to the east and to the west, midway between the tropic sea to the south and the frozen sea to the north, stands Iowa. And the way thither — will it interest you for a few moments?

[This account of the French explorations which led to the discovery of Iowa is adapted for THE PALIMPSEST from an address by Mr. Weld before the State Historical Society of Iowa in 1910.—THE EDITOR]



Singularly enough the history of the Mississippi Valley began with Jacques Cartier's voyage up the St. Lawrence in 1534. Fishing fleets began to frequent the waters about Newfoundland, occasionally ascending the river for the winter and carrying on a profitable fur trade with the Indians. It soon became evident that this trade was well worth developing, and furs came to be sought by the French in the north as eagerly if not as rapaciously as was gold by the Spaniards in the south. Champlain came up the river, bringing colonists who founded Quebec in 1608, the same year that the English founded Jamestown.

Whence came this supply of furs? And whence came this great river, mightier ten-fold than any of the rivers of Europe? The first of these problems appealed to Champlain's superiors, the latter to Champlain himself. He took but little interest in his colony except as it served him as a base for his explorations. He heard of a great sea to the west and would reach it and find thereby the way to Far Cathay. The St. Lawrence itself was blocked by the Iroquois Indians of northern New York, whose hostility to the French, and particularly to Champlain, was fierce and unrelenting. So he pushed his canoes up the Ottawa until its waters enmeshed with those of a lake called Nipissing. From this lake he followed a river, now known as French River, down to the Georgian Bay of Lake Huron. The Great Lakes lay before him, but it was not his to explore them.



Indeed he had been preceded thus far by Franciscan missionaries who were already established among the Huron Indians at the head of this same bay.

Then followed two decades of confusion and re-organization of the French colonies. The great Richelieu next assumed their management and, though Champlain was reappointed Governor, commerce and trade were monopolized by a company known as the Hundred Associates; while the Jesuits were virtually in charge of all other interests, temporal as well as spiritual.

In July of 1634 it was that the Jesuit missionaries Brébeuf, Daniel, and Davost embarked with the Indian canoe fleet on its annual return journey from Three Rivers to the Huron country. Jean Nicollet was one of this motley company, but the situation was far less novel to him than to his black-robed fellow countrymen. Brébeuf speaks admiringly of him as being "equal to all the hardships endured by the most robust savages." The tiresome ascent of the Ottawa was finally accomplished and the canoes glided out upon the waters of Lake Nipissing; thence down French River to Georgian Bay and on to its head, where the Jesuits established themselves in the place formerly occupied by the Franciscans.

They were soon joined by Nicollet, who had tarried for a time with the Indians on an island in the Ottawa. After procuring a suitable outfit and engaging seven Hurons to act as guides, Nicollet bade adieu to Father Brébeuf and his associates and set

out on his voyage westward. His commission required him to explore such countries as he might be able to reach and to make commercial treaties with the people dwelling therein. The party coasted along the eastern and northern shores of Lake Huron, passing through the dangerous channel to the north of the Manitoulin until they found themselves tossing about in the eddies below the Sault Ste. Marie in water through which now floats a commerce whose tonnage is three times that which passes Port Saïd and Suez.

But for Nicollet the scene seems to have had no special interest. He must have heard from the Indians of Lake Superior, but makes no mention of having visited it. The water coursing past his camp at the foot of the rapids was fresh and gave no promise that the "salt sea" of which he was in search lay beyond. Thus did he miss discovering the greatest of all the Great Lakes.

Dropping down St. Mary's Strait he rounded the upper peninsula of Michigan and passed on through the Straits of Mackinac. The "second lake of the Hurons," as Lake Michigan was for a time called, lay before him. Boldly following the northern shore of this new-found sea Nicollet entered Green Bay, land-locked by the present State of Wisconsin. He pushed on to its head, where he for the first time encountered tribes of Indians with whom he could not converse. He believed himself upon the outskirts of the vast Chinese Empire. Being invited to a



council with the chiefs he donned the gorgeous mandarin's cloak, which he had brought in an oilskin bag to wear at his appearance before the Chinese court, and approaching, discharged his pistols into the air. The impression was all that could be desired, but he soon discovered that he had not yet reached China nor even its outskirts. He was well received, however, and passed on up the Fox River.

After traversing Lake Winnebago he found himself once more among Indians of the Algonquin stock whose language was intelligible. From them he heard of a "great water" which could be reached in three days by a short portage from the upper Fox River. The portage referred to was, of course, that into the Wisconsin River at what is now Portage City. Had he taken this "three days' journey" he would have debouched, not upon a new sea as he supposed, but upon the upper course of the Mississippi at Prairie du Chien opposite McGregor, Iowa. The "way to Iowa" had been pointed out, but many years were to pass before the first white man set foot on Iowa soil. Why Nicollet missed this opportunity, as he had already missed that at Lake Superior, is not in the least clear. What he did do was to travel overland to the south to visit and establish friendly relations with the great nation of Illinois Indians, obtaining at the same time some general notion of the extent of Lake Michigan.

But the discoveries of Nicollet were not soon to be followed up. Scarcely had he returned to Three



Rivers when Champlain died. Then came a succession of incompetent Governors. The Iroquois took advantage of the situation and devastated the country, utterly destroying the Huron nation in 1649. Such of the Jesuit missionaries as had escaped death were hastily recalled. The fugitive Hurons and Ottawas betook themselves to the remotest shores of the Great Lakes or sought refuge at Quebec, while others became amalgamated with the Iroquois themselves. Even the fortified settlements on the St. Lawrence were in danger.

In 1660 Radisson and his brother-in-law, Grosseilliers, launched their canoes upon Lake Superior and followed the south shore to the end of the lake. Here they located the remnants of the Huron and Ottawa tribes, secure in these distant regions from the fury of the Iroquois. It is claimed that the brothers, in their overland explorations, came upon the Mississippi; but, while it may be reasonably inferred, this is not definitely confirmed by Radisson's journal.

Jean Talon, the capable Intendant of New France, was now devoting his best energies to establishing the claim of the mother country to the broad interior, the real extent of which was beginning to unfold with the simultaneous advance of missionary and fur trader. He meant to occupy this region and secure control of its great waterways. Little recked he of Far Cathay. He dreamed of a vast new empire for France. The English, mere grubbers of the soil,

were to be confined to the region between the Atlantic coast and the Alleghanies, while Spanish influence was to be thwarted by the establishment of French colonies on the Gulf of Mexico.

A splendid expedition was organized under Saint-Lusson and sent to Sault Ste. Marie to take formal possession of the whole interior of North America in the name of the French King, Louis XIV. But Talon was determined to give the claim made in behalf of his sovereign a more substantial foundation. He resolved to discover and map the course of that mysterious "great river" concerning which such conflicting but insistent rumors had been current ever since the days of Champlain. To execute his purpose he chose Louis Joliet.

The experienced explorer was joined at Mackinac by Father Marquette, then in charge of the Huron mission at St. Ignace. It was early spring. The ice had just left the straits. They made instant haste to prepare for the journey. Five companions were chosen — all Frenchmen and experienced wood-rangers. Their two canoes of birch bark, stiffened with cedar splints, were selected with unusual care. Though large enough to carry safely the seven *voyageurs* and their provisions of smoked meat and maize, besides blankets, camp utensils, guns, instruments, and a quantity of trinkets to serve as presents to the Indians, they were still light enough to be easily portable. Joliet and the five wood-rangers were dressed in the buckskin suits then worn by

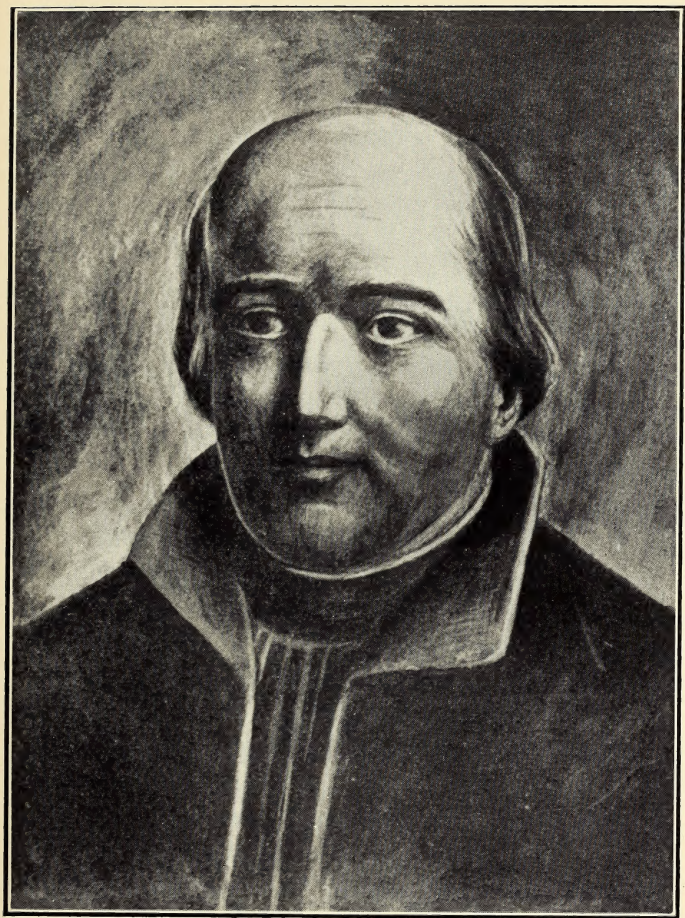


frontiersmen; but Marquette retained his long black Jesuit's cassock and cumbered himself with no weapon save his rosary.

On the seventeenth of May, 1673, they pushed off their canoes into the crescent-shaped bay at St. Ignace, rounded the point to the south, and headed westward along the northern shore of Lake Michigan. The *voyageurs* must have felt the quickening influence of the changing season. They paddled all day, relieving one another by turns. Trolling lines were set to catch fish. At twilight they landed to prepare for the night. The sand of the beach still retained the heat of the midday sun. Each canoe was hauled up beyond the reach of the waves, turned over, and propped up by one edge to serve as shelter. One of the party collected dry driftwood for the fire. Another cut forked sticks and set them up in the sand to hold a crossbar upon which the kettle was hung. Hulled corn was cooked; the fish were broiled in the embers; and Marquette blessed the simple meal. Then, sitting 'round the camp fire, the tired explorers smoked their pipes and rested. Such was the routine of their voyage on Lake Michigan.

Pushing on day after day, along the route followed by Nicollet thirty-nine years before, the party soon entered Green Bay. They turned into the Menominee River and visited the village of the Indian tribe of the same name, which signifies wild rice. Here they heard dreadful tales of the country and the river which they were about to visit and





FATHER MARQUETTE  
A RETOUCHE COPY OF A REPUTED PORTRAIT



were urged to go no farther. A few days later they were welcomed at the mission at the head of the bay, still conducted, as it had been founded, by Father Claude Allouez. After making some final arrangements here they ascended Fox River, crossed Lake Winnebago, and entered the devious course of the upper Fox. On the seventh of June they had reached the neighborhood of the portage to the Wisconsin River, first made known by Nicollet.

Guides were secured to conduct them to the point at which the portage was easiest. This point reached, they carried their canoes and baggage a mile and a half over a marshy prairie and, parting with their guides, launched upon the Meskousing (Wisconsin), whose current might bear them to the South Sea, the Gulf of California, or the Gulf of Mexico, they knew not which.

The navigation of the Wisconsin presented no serious difficulties and ten days later, on the seventeenth of June, the explorers floated out upon the broad surface of a mighty river, which they must have recognized at once as the "great water" which they had been sent to find out and explore. They were in the shadow of the almost mountainous bluff at the foot of which lies the quaint little town of South McGregor, the Bingen of the Mississippi. Beyond lay the rolling prairies of Iowa; but little did they, or their successors for a century and a half to come, dream of such a Commonwealth as ours. The depth and breadth of the channel and the swift-



ness of the current gave them some notion, however, of the extent of the territory to which they had gained access.

The way to Iowa — to the whole Middle West as well — had been discovered. But between the discovery of Iowa and the beginning of the history of this Commonwealth there is an interval of a century or more. During this interval the region was frequently visited by white men. Its broad prairies, the Mesopotamia of the New World, were doubtless well known to the French and American traders who by turns coursed up and down the Mississippi and the Missouri in quest of buffalo skins.

But the men who have made Iowa and our Middle West what it is to-day came, not by way of the Great Lakes from Canada, nor up stream from the French colonies of Louisiana; not in canoes laden with baubles for cheating the savage, but in emigrant wagons with wives and children and bringing agricultural implements. They came swarming through the passes of the Alleghanies and brought with them into this new land the spirit of the American Revolution.

LAENAS G. WELD

## The Discovery of Iowa

On the seventeenth of June, 1923, two men stood on the heights above McGregor, Iowa, and gazed upon the panorama of river and tree-clad islands below, and the sweep of Wisconsin farm land in the distance. One wore the long black cassock, the cincture, the crucifix, and the shovel-board hat of a Jesuit missionary of the seventeenth century, while the other was clad in the fringed coat, trousers, and moccasins of a *coureur de bois* of New France. Both were Iowa men — one impersonating the brave but gentle Father Jacques Marquette, the other enacting the rôle of the intrepid and skilled Louis Joliet — who, with boatmen five, newspaper representatives, and cameramen, were that afternoon about to start on a two hundred and fifty mile replica voyage in commemoration of the discovery of Iowa.

Far below them a ferry boat churned its way up the channel toward the pontoon railroad bridge. Horseshoe Island, with its graceful curves and luxuriant foliage, presented a bit of nature's landscape gardening. Across the Mississippi, framed in a setting of green-topped hills and bluffs that merged into soft blue haze in the distance, lay the quaint old French town of Prairie du Chien. Above the trees to the southeast loomed the towers of Campion College. Farther north gleamed the limestone ruins of

Old Fort Crawford above which the Stars and Stripes were proudly waving, a reminder of the importance of this frontier post in the days of the fur traders. The spacious buildings and lawns of St. Mary's College were visible on a gently sloping hillside, where amid a riot of color, Wisconsin citizens were celebrating the discovery of the Mississippi with a pageant, "The Father of Waters".

Some four miles below, the gentle current of the Wisconsin River disembogued into the swifter flowing Mississippi almost opposite the bold promontory now called Pike's Hill. It was there, two hundred and fifty years ago, that "we safely entered the Missisipi on the 17th of June, with a joy that I cannot express", wrote Father Marquette. On the seventeenth of June, 1923, the replica *voyageurs* floated out upon the choppy surface of the mighty river, not perhaps with joy but with wonder at the magnificence of the view. The mountainous range of bluffs dominated by Pike's Hill overshadowed the river on the west, while scallops of green-clad hills with layers of outcropping limestone framed the scene on the east, back of the flood plain along the shore.

Turning downstream, the explorers of 1923 beheld new features at every bend of the river. New scenic delights greeted them on every hand, much as the view must have charmed the adventurers of two and a half centuries ago. Islands, willow fringed and crowned with cottonwoods, maples, and elms, ap-



peared; the river widened and the sun dipped in a blaze of color behind the western hills. Then came modern touches of life and action. A lumbering freight train thundered along the base of the cliffs and the engineer whistled a noisy greeting. Clam muckers watched the symbolical voyage pass by, amazement pictured on their faces. Passengers on an upstream packet waved handkerchiefs and shouted salutations. Twilight settled down and yellow gleams atop the light boards along the shore marked the course of the channel. Guttenberg appeared off the starboard bow and two paleface braves in Indian garb put out in a canoe from shore bearing a message of welcome and an invitation to spend the night as guests of the town.

How different must have been the first night passed by the seven Frenchmen along the Iowa shore two hundred and fifty years ago! Then, as the golden sun sank to rest behind the bluffs and twilight fell, they pushed the prows of their two birch-bark canoes ashore. Stretching their cramped limbs they prepared to do their simple cooking. A tiny campfire was built with dry driftwood and in the glowing embers they cooked their frugal meal of Indian corn and smoked meat. Perhaps a fish caught on a towline added a supply of tasty food. Father Marquette invoked a blessing, and they all ate heartily after the day of paddling and the thrill of a great achievement. A short rest, a pipeful of fragrant tobacco, and then the boatmen extinguished

the red coals of their dying campfire and again launching their canoes, the party floated a few miles farther on to spend the night. When darkness spread its sable robes over the river they anchored at some distance from the shore, and a boatman watched while the others slept.

At sunrise they were on their way. Once a huge fish struck Marquette's canoe with such violence that the frail craft was nearly overturned. The great sturgeon which "rushed through the water like hungry sharks" excited their admiration and the curious paddle fish aroused their wonder. Herds of deer and buffalo were seen and wild turkeys made a welcome addition to their meager food supply, but no sign of human habitation met their searching gaze. They seemed to be alone on the long sweeps of the broad Mississippi with its changing kaleidoscope of wooded islands and sand bars, its tree-covered bluffs and open spaces alternating along the banks, and its wide surface, now smooth as glass, now churned to white-capped angry waves by a stiff south wind. Every night, however, they took precautions against a surprise attack. Thus they journeyed along the eastern shore of the Iowa land during that eventful month of June, 1673.

The river then flowed untrammelled to the sea, but the *voyageurs* of 1923 saw on every hand the attempts of man to subdue the spirit of the Mississippi and to control its moods. Wing dams made of woven willows weighted down by limestone rocks directed



the current into the channel. Government dredges and snag boats puffed upstream pushing barges piled high with willows. Dingy steamboats nosed along barges heavily loaded with sand and rock repairs for the levees. Red buoys and black buoys slowly bobbing in the water and light boards and diamond boards at intervals along the shore made modern navigation easy.

An excursion boat, gleaming white in the glaring sun, appeared around an island downstream and, with black smoke pouring from the twin stacks, it approached and passed on the port side, following the deepest part of the channel. The high swells made by its large stern paddle wheel tossed the small canoes of the replica explorers like chips. Spray from the plunging bows dashed over the boatmen, drenching their costumes and glistening on the fringed coat of Joliet and the black robe of Marquette.

A herd of cattle standing knee deep in the water far out on a sand bar took the place of the buffalo and deer that were seen by the original explorers. A sail boat manned by a sunburnt, barefoot boy dashed athwart the bow of the accompanying launch and careened at a dangerous angle as he doubled back to watch the flotilla pass. He yelled and waved, and his companion, a fox terrier, barked excitedly. Fishermen in motor dories trailed their lines and waved a salute in passing. Sandy bathing beaches and summer cottages with pleasant names — Wood-



side, Chalet, Three Elms, and Idlewild — suggested cool retreats from the scorching heat. A cluster of houseboats with drying reels and fish racks marked the approach to a city. Then in the distance appeared the graceful outline of a high-arched traffic bridge and the squatty, rugged framework of a railroad bridge — signals for the readjustment of wigs and the refashioning of French beards. A scheduled stop lay just ahead.

No such sights greeted the original *voyageurs*. Not a canoe, not a hut or tepee, not a single sign of human life did they descry for eight days. Finally on the twenty-fifth of June, 1673, as the exploring party drifted along the Iowa shore, one of the group noticed footprints on the sandy beach near the water's edge. Quickly the canoes were beached and the two leaders, unarmed, started out to follow the marks in the sand, leaving their five companions to guard the supplies. It was a bold action for the explorer and the missionary, for neither knew what dangers lurked at the end of the narrow, somewhat beaten path which led up the bank to the prairie.

Silently following the slender trail for about two leagues — five or six miles — they beheld an Indian village on the bank of a river and two others on a hill about a mile from the first. Here the two Frenchmen commended themselves to God, imploring His aid, and then cautiously approached without being noticed until they could hear the Indians talking.

On that quiet day in June the beauty of early summer had settled upon the Mississippi Valley. The streets of the Indian villages were quiet, smoke curled slowly above the lodges, and the murmur of voices drifted through the open doorways. Inside, Indian women pounded corn into meal in heavy bowls while the braves lolled at ease on the blankets or mended bows and smoked long-stemmed pipes. Blinking papooses, brown bundles of stolid indifference or squalling animation, leaned in cradle-boards against the walls.

Suddenly the village was startled into life. A loud shout from the strangers announced their approach. The two messengers from France stopped to watch the effect. In a moment the villagers swarmed out into the sunlight, pipes were tossed aside, broken bows were forgotten, and the women ceased their work to rush about in wild excitement. As quickly as it began the tumult quieted. Someone had recognized the strangers as Frenchmen and friends; someone in the village, doubtless, knew whence the visitors came; someone, perhaps, had seen the energetic fur traders and the black-robed priests on the shore of Lake Superior or beside the waters of Green Bay.

Four old men stepped out of the crowd and advanced toward the strangers. Slowly they walked, two of them holding aloft in the bright sunlight finely ornamented tobacco pipes adorned with multi-colored feathers. Not a word did they speak as with



solemn tread they slowly covered the distance between the village and the white men. Finally, as they drew near, they stopped and gazed attentively, yet with respect, at the visitors. Thereupon, Father Marquette, assured that the solemn approach of the four old men was meant as a courteous welcome, asked in Indian dialect, "Who are you?"

"We are Illinois", the old men answered, and as a token of peace they offered the strangers the calumets to smoke, and invited them to enter the village.

Together the four Indians and their guests approached the cluster of lodges where the Indians awaited them impatiently. At the door of one of the huts stood an old man, with his hands extended toward the sun. As the group drew near the old man spoke, "How beautiful is the sun, O Frenchmen, when thou comest to visit us! All our village awaits thee, and thou shalt enter all our cabins in peace."

Then he bade them enter his lodge where a crowd of savages looked upon the visitors in curious yet respectful silence. From time to time in a low voice came the words, "How good it is, my brothers, that you should visit us." Again the pipe of peace was passed, first to the strangers and then to the elders. During this ceremony of friendship a messenger arrived bearing an invitation from the great chief of all the Illinois to proceed to his village for a council.

Thither they set out, the black-gown and the explorer and the elders accompanied by a great crowd of Indian braves, squaws, and children. The un-



usual sight of two Frenchmen in their village attracted all of the Indians. Some lay in the grass along the path and watched the procession pass, others ran on ahead and then retraced their steps in order to see the strangers again. Yet all this was done noiselessly and with great awe of the white men.

When the procession reached the village of the big chief he was beheld standing at the entrance of his lodge between two old men. All three stood erect and naked, holding their calumets high toward the glowing sun. The chief welcomed the party and drew them within his cabin. Again they smoked the calumet in silence, and the Indians awaited the message of the white men. Father Marquette spoke first and, following the custom with the Indians, gave them four presents, each the token of a message.

With the first he told them that he, Jacques Marquette, a priest of the Jesuit Order, and his companion, Louis Joliet, were journeying peacefully to visit the tribes dwelling on the river as far as the sea. With the second token he announced that God, who had created them, had pity on them and, wishing to make Himself known to all people, had sent the priest for that purpose. Then he gave them a third present saying that the great chief of the French had subdued the Iroquois and had restored peace everywhere. Finally, with the fourth gift, he begged the Illinois to give him and his companion all the information they had about the sea and the na-

tions through whose land they must pass to reach it.

When the black-gown finished speaking the chief arose, and resting his hand upon the head of a little Indian boy, a captive slave, he spoke thus, "I thank thee, Black-gown, and thee, O Frenchman, for having taken so much trouble to come to visit us. Never has the earth been so beautiful or the sun so bright as to-day. Never has our river been so calm or so free from rocks, which thy canoes have removed in passing. Never has our tobacco tasted so good or our corn appeared so fine as we now see it. Here is my son whom I give thee to show thee my heart. I beg thee to have pity on me, and on all my nation. It is thou who knowest the great Spirit who has made us all. It is thou who speakest to Him, and who hearest His word. Beg Him to give me life and health, and to come to dwell with us, in order to make us know Him."

Then the chief placed the captive Indian boy near the visitors and gave them a second present, a long-stemmed calumet, elaborately carved and decorated with feathers signifying peace. It was to be a talisman for the rest of the journey. With a third present he begged the visitors on behalf of his nation to go no farther on account of the dangers that lay ahead. Marquette replied that he feared not death and regarded no happiness greater than that of losing his life for the glory of Him who had made them all. This sentiment amazed all the Indians, but they made no reply and the council ended.



A feast followed. During the progress of the council Indian women had hurried to prepare a meal worthy of the occasion. Young girls now brought into the lodge the food which the squaws had made ready. The first course was sagamité — Indian corn meal boiled in water and seasoned with fat. An Indian, acting as master of ceremonies, filled a spoon and presented it several times to the mouths of the visitors as if they were children. Then the maidens brought fresh from the fire a second platter on which lay three smoking fish. The same Indian took some pieces of this, removed the bones and, after blowing upon the morsels to cool them, placed the fish in the mouths of the Frenchmen as he had fed them the sagamité. For the third course they brought a large dog freshly killed and roasted for the occasion, but when they learned that their guests did not eat that delicacy, it was removed. The fourth course was roast buffalo meat, the fattest and choicest morsels of which were given the priest and his companion.

When the feast ended the hosts conducted the Frenchmen through the entire village consisting of fully three hundred lodges. During this tour an orator harangued the people to see the visitors without annoying them. Everywhere the natives presented their new friends with gifts — belts, garters, and bracelets made of hair dyed red, yellow, and gray. When nightfall came the explorers slept in the cabin of the chief as his honored guests.



On the afternoon of the next day Marquette and Joliet took leave of the chief promising to pass his village again within four moons. They retraced their steps along the trail to the Mississippi, courteously accompanied by nearly six hundred Indians. On the Iowa bank of the Father of Waters the Indians watched the white men settle themselves in their canoes, taking with them the Indian slave boy who was destined to share their adventures in the Great Valley. The sun was midway down the sky when they shoved off from the shore and slowly paddled downstream amid the shouts of the Indians in manifestation of their joy at the visit of the gallant strangers.

Thus ended the first visit of white men to Iowa. Two hundred and fifty years later the replica *voyageurs* encountered much the same hospitality, friendliness, and kindly interest that the original travellers met when they visited the Illinois Indians. Hundreds of Iowans at McGregor, Guttenberg, Dubuque, Bellevue, Clinton, Davenport, Muscatine, Burlington, Fort Madison, and Montrose met the explorers of 1923 at the water front, looked at them in friendly curiosity, and then adopted them as honored guests. They harangued the travellers and the *voyageurs* responded. Redmen in full regalia added color to the welcome at the landings. The trip became a continuous pageant in commemoration of an important episode in Iowa history. Each city feasted the party, gave them presents, and showed them

places of interest. The modern explorers were taken to the Abbey of New Melleray where Trappist monks practice the rules of an order founded almost six hundred years before the discovery of Iowa; they visited the quaint village of Tête des Mort, a bit of rural Europe in an Iowa valley; they inspected the United States Arsenal at Rock Island; and they went through the government Biological Station at Fairport.

Finally, at the beautiful Crapo Park of Burlington, in a natural amphitheater overlooking the river, with green trees for a background and a vista of wooded islands and rolling prairies in the distance, was reënacted the welcome of Marquette and Joliet by the Illinois Indians. Jesuit priest and French explorer, Indian braves, chiefs, old men, squaws, and children, appearing before an audience of thousands of people, caught and reflected the spirit of the first visit of white men to Iowa. Then followed an eloquent address by a priest of the same missionary order to which Father Marquette belonged. Appropriate ceremonies at Bluff Park, Montrose, culminated the ten day celebration in honor of the discovery of Iowa and the first visit of white men to her borders.

As the sun was midway down the sky the replica *voyageurs* set out for home in a launch, towing the two canoes. Darkness overtook them, and in the north jagged flashes of lightning silhouetted the bluffs and trees on the shoreline. The heavy rumble

of thunder echoed down the valley. A train rushed past, the glare of the headlight piercing the darkness and the flare from the opened fire box revealing the fireman. Then the rain! Curtains hastily lowered protected the travellers who had endured ten days of stifling heat on the river without a suggestion of a storm. At last the docks loomed ahead out of the darkness and the launch slid into its quarters. The *voyageurs* of 1923 had rediscovered the Father of Waters and the friendliness of the people who to-day inhabit the Iowa country.

BRUCE E. MAHAN



## Father Marquette

Humanity is relentless in its quick forgetfulness of the dead, but more than two centuries have not dimmed the achievements of Father Jacques Marquette, nor obliterated the memory of the fine idealism of his life. Much of the wilderness in which he lived and worked has become peopled, the little mission of St. Ignace which he built has long since fallen to ruins, but Marquette's spirit is still felt by the hundreds of summer tourists who visit the monument at St. Ignace, Michigan, which marks the site of his former chapel.

Jacques Marquette grew to manhood in the shadow of dominant personalities and past glories of France. Born in Laon in 1637, he came of a family which cherished the memory of a long line of valiant warriors and distinguished statesmen. As a child he played among the crumbling ruins of walls and ramparts which had withstood the attacks of many foes of France; a dozen times a day he gazed upon the imposing cathedral built by the Church of Rome in the twelfth century; and his walks frequently led him among the ruins of an ancient leaning tower, built like that of Pisa.

The influence of the boy's mother, Rose de la Salle, together with a natural tendency toward a life of piety, soon made him determined to abandon the

traditions of his ancient house which marked its sons for statesmen and warriors, and to enter the service of the Cross. Shortly after he was seventeen, he went to the neighboring town of Nancy and entered the Jesuit college as a novice.

Beginning in 1632, the Jesuits had gradually penetrated far into the forests of North America and were attempting to spread Christianity among the Indians of lower Canada. During his long and tedious months of study in France, Marquette had, no doubt, read accounts of these Jesuit activities and pictured himself as a savior of the savages in this strange, far country. Whatever his hopes may have been, he burned with an intense desire to try his fortunes as a forest missionary in America.

For twelve years his ambition remained ungratified, but he did not lose his ardor. At last, in 1666, when he was twenty-nine years of age, the long-wished-for orders arrived and Marquette quickly embarked for the missionary field of New France. He reached Quebec in September of the same year and it was there, while he was gaining his first impressions of the New World, that he met Louis Joliet, with whom he was afterward to share one of the greatest adventures of his life.

After a rest of twenty days, Marquette was sent to Three Rivers, seventy-seven miles above Quebec, to become a pupil of Father Gabriel Drüillettes in the many-sided art of the Indian missionary. In marked contrast to the theological seminaries of Old



France, Three Rivers was a rude school in which the young priest learned to endure the hardships of toilsome journeys, to face the horrors of famine, pestilence, and war, and to speak the strange languages of the Indians. But Marquette's natural ability, coupled with his great zeal, seems to have overcome all obstacles.

Daily association for two years with the greasy savages of Three Rivers, constant observation of their manners and customs, and the mastery of six dialects was deemed to be sufficient apprenticeship, and Marquette was sent to the Ottawa mission at Sault Ste. Marie in the summer of 1668. There he was associated with "twenty or thirty Nations, all different in language, customs, and Policy." After his first winter's work, he wrote that the harvest of souls "is very abundant, and that it only rests with the Missionaries to baptize the entire population". He was skeptical of the sincerity of the Indian converts, however, fearing that they were "too acquiescent" and that after baptism they would still "cling to their customary superstitions." He gave especial attention to baptizing the dying, "who are a surer harvest."

Marquette remained only a year at the Sault and then he was sent on to the farthestmost corner of Lake Superior to take charge of the mission at La Pointe. Built on a narrow spit of sand and gravel some six miles long, the mission was surrounded by a wild and picturesque landscape of



steep cliffs of sandstone and dark pine forests. Marquette assumed his duties with a quaking heart for it was a hazardous undertaking, but it was exactly the opportunity for which he had been longing. He went at once to visit the neighboring Indians, and found them to be of the Huron nation and practically all baptized. Some of the other tribes, however, were found to be "very far from the Kingdom of God."

It was during his service at La Pointe that Marquette first heard of the great river which flowed so far southward that the nations about the Great Lakes had never heard of its mouth. He also learned of the Illinois Indians — a strange tribe of savages who raised maize and enormous squashes, and who did not know what a canoe was. Then and there Marquette conceived the ambition to explore the Mississippi and to carry the Gospel to the benighted Illinois who worshipped the sun and the thunder.

In the spring of 1671 the Hurons near La Pointe were threatened with an attack by the warlike Sioux, and fled to Mackinac Island. Marquette abandoned the mission and went with them. There, at the junction of lakes Huron, Superior, and Michigan — the gateway to the land of the Illinois in the great valley — the shrewd Jesuit took his post and bided the time when he could fulfill his desire.

Meanwhile he was kept very busy, ministering to the religious needs of the Indians, baptizing the infants, and making excursions into the surrounding

country by canoe and on foot. Near the edge of the island he established the little mission of St. Ignace, which was later transferred to the mainland. Its site is to-day marked by an imposing monument, a shrine for hundreds of tourists.

Scarcely more than a year had elapsed before Marquette's dreams came true. It was in December, 1672, when his friend Joliet arrived from Quebec with orders for him to join in exploring the Mississippi River and to spread the faith among the natives of that country. It was a momentous occasion in the little settlement, and during the winter months Marquette and Joliet were busy collecting information about the great western country, drawing maps, and preparing for the long journey in the spring.

On the seventeenth of May, 1673, the two Frenchmen, together with five boatmen, set out in two small birch-bark canoes. By way of the Fox and Wisconsin rivers, they reached the Mississippi just a month from the time they started, and eight days later paid their first visit to the people who then lived in Iowa.

After two days of feasting with the Illinois Indians, the party proceeded on down the river. Various thrilling adventures convinced the explorers that they were in a strange land indeed. They had not gone far when they saw, painted high upon the smooth surface of a cliff, two hideous monsters, the work of some imaginative Indian artist. "They are



as large As a calf", writes Father Marquette. "They have Horns on their heads Like those of deer, a horrible look, red eyes, a beard Like a tiger's, a face somewhat like a man's, a body Covered with scales, and so Long A tail that it winds all around the Body, passing the head and going back between the legs, ending in a Fish's tail."

While still discussing these pictured rocks they heard the rush of a rapids and in a few moments they were in the muddy and turbulent waters of the Missouri River. "An accumulation of large and entire trees, branches, and floating islands, was issuing from the mouth of the river, with such impetuosity", says Marquette, that they could not pass through without great danger.

Going farther to the south, the explorers encountered great swarms of mosquitoes near the broad mouth of the Ohio. The heat and the insects made life miserable until the men hoisted canvas tents over their canoes, after the manner of the southern Indians.

A few days later, as the *voyageurs* approached a village of Mitchigamea Indians, they saw the savages preparing for battle. "They were armed with bows, arrows, hatchets, clubs, and shields", relates Father Marquette. "They prepared to attack us, on both land and water; part of them embarked in great wooden canoes — some to ascend, others to descend the river, in order to Intercept us and surround us on all sides. Those who were on land came



and went, as if to commence The attack. In fact, some Young men threw themselves into The water, to come and seize my Canoe; but the current compelled Them to return to land. One of them then hurled his club, which passed over without striking us. In vain I showed The calumet, and made them signs that we were not coming to war against them. The alarm continued, and they were already preparing to pierce us with arrows from all sides, when God suddenly touched the hearts of the old men, who were standing at the water's edge."

The elders succeeded in checking the ardor of the young braves and invited the Frenchmen to their village. The Indians could not understand Marquette's Algonquin dialects, but they told him that another tribe farther down the river near the mouth of the Arkansas could give what information they desired.

The Arkansas Indians received the explorers with unmistakable demonstrations of friendship. The white men were feasted until nightfall, while the Indians told of the dangers of the river below, of the fierce tribes that inhabited the country, and of the murderous Spaniards not far away. Pondering upon these warnings, convinced that they were within three days' journey of the sea, and anxious to report their discoveries, Marquette and Joliet decided to turn their canoes northward.

The trip home was begun on July seventeenth. Paddling against the stream was far different from

floating with it, the boatmen soon discovered. They were forced to thread their way back and forth across the river to avoid the swiftest currents. As if to multiply their woes, the heat became almost unbearable and the mosquitoes were a constant irritation. Camping in the damp night air, without fire to avoid attack, and sleeping in cramped positions in the canoes were unhealthy practices which would harm the health of any man, and Marquette, being naturally of a delicate physique, began to show signs of collapse.

At last they reached the Illinois River, where friendly Indians told them of a shorter way to Lake Michigan than the route by which they had come. In the course of their journey up the Illinois, they came one day to a village in whose lodges lived the same Indians they had visited in Iowa. The tired *voyageurs* were welcomed with such hospitality that they remained three days in the village. Marquette told the Indians of the God who had protected him on his long voyage, and before he departed he promised to return some day and establish a mission among them.

Reaching Lake Michigan, probably by way of the Chicago River, the weary explorers pushed their sadly worn canoes on toward the Jesuit mission of St. François Xavier at De Pere, where Marquette had been assigned for service. There he arrived at the end of September, ill and exhausted, just four months after he had started on his journey.



During the long and tedious winter which followed, Marquette's mind was busy making plans to return to the Illinois tribes and establish a mission near Kaskaskia. In the early autumn he believed himself well enough to accomplish this task and he started from De Pere in October, 1674. Two French servants accompanied him.

Along the shore of Lake Michigan the travellers encountered cold and stormy weather. Constant exposure to wind, rain, and cold so weakened Father Marquette that, upon reaching the Chicago River in December, the two boatmen were forced to build a rude hut and there, amidst the great silences of the wilderness, the three men spent the winter. The black-gown struggled through the strain of the cold season and in March the three men pursued their journey toward Kaskaskia.

Marquette's health failed rapidly but they reached the Indian village on the eighth of April where Marquette "was received as an angel from Heaven." A tabernacle of saplings covered with reed mats and bearskins was built close to the village and in it were hung "several pieces of chinese taffeta, attached to these four large Pictures of the blessed Virgin, which were visible on all Sides." There the priest spoke eloquently to more than a thousand braves who listened "with universal Joy", and prayed that he might return to them again as soon as his health would permit.

Marquette's illness grew steadily worse and,



realizing that death was not far distant, he started north with the hope of reaching the mission of St. Ignace before he died. His two faithful servants, taking advantage of the northward current, pushed the little canoe along the eastern shore of Lake Michigan, but April and early May were cold and stormy, and the two boatmen despaired of being able to reach their destination in time. Marquette, preparing to die, reclined upon the reed mats in the bottom of the boat.

At last, perceiving a high eminence which he deemed well-suited for his burial, Marquette directed his servants to stop, for he had selected that spot as the place of his last repose. It was early in the day and the boatmen wished to go farther, but "God raised a Contrary wind", and they were compelled to turn back to the place which Marquette had pointed out. There they built a little fire, made a wretched cabin of bark, and the dying missionary was laid beneath the humble roof. While the men were tearfully engaged in making camp, Marquette spent his last hours in prayer, and on the eighteenth of May, 1675, "with a countenance beaming and all aglow, he expired so gently that it might have been regarded as a pleasant sleep."

The two servants buried their master as he had directed, and placed a large cross to mark his grave. In the spring, some Kiskakons carried his body to St. Ignace and lowered it into a small vault in the middle of the church. The little mission was burned

in 1700 and for more than one hundred and seventy-five years his resting place was unknown. In 1877, Father Edward Jucker discovered the grave and Marquette's remains now rest in the church of St. Ignace and at Marquette University in Milwaukee.

Marquette was never a man of great strength; he was unfitted for the rough life of the wilderness. His gentle manner and frail physique, however, concealed a will of iron. Earnest, kind, and sincere, the model of his whole life was Saint François Xavier, probably the greatest of all Jesuit missionaries, who extended the faith through fifty-two kingdoms in Asia. In many respects, the incidents of Marquette's life ran parallel to those of his great predecessor. When death overtook him, alone in the wilderness, he spent his last few hours giving thanks to God that he could die "as he had always prayed, in a Wretched cabin in the midst of the forests and bereft of all human succor", exactly as Saint François Xavier did many centuries before him on the other side of the world.

RUTH B. MIDDLEAUGH

## Louis Joliet

The story begins on Thursday the twenty-first of September in the year 1645. It was on that day that Jean Joliet, a poor wagon-maker in the service of the great fur-trading company of the Hundred Associates which then controlled Canada, might have been seen by some of the inhabitants of Quebec as he and his wife, Marie, climbed slowly up the heights with their infant son and made their way to the church of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Mary. There, in the presence of parents and god-parents, the curé baptized and christened the child Louis. Afterward the little family returned to their humble home in the old Lower Town at the foot of the towering rock of Quebec beside the mighty St. Lawrence.

During the years that followed, while the little French trading post with its two or three hundred colonists, adventurers, priests, and nuns was just beginning to assume the dignity becoming to the capital of New France, the sturdy youngster outgrew his infancy and thrived in the midst of hardship and privation after the manner of the hardy race from which he sprang. The winters were long and cold, and the summers were filled with dread of the Indians. Yet the cheerful French folk faced impending calamity with a laugh or a *bon mot* and



society in the Upper Town, where the *seigneurs* brought their families to spend the winter months, reproduced the gaiety of the salons of Old France.

Louis Joliet developed into an alert and active boy. Before he was old enough to remember distinctly his father died. He attended the Jesuit school with the other children of Quebec, most of whom lived in the Lower Town near the landing. Proximity to the St. Lawrence no doubt inspired the boy with a fancy for voyages, while the arrival and departure of missionaries, traders, and Indians gave rise to dreams of adventure and manly ambition. One of the youthful amusements was to play in the brook that came down from Cape Diamond in a succession of little cascades. Often, as a boy, Louis Joliet may have climbed the steep and narrow ascent from Wolfe's Cove to the Plains of Abraham, just as a century later the British stealthily gained the same impregnable heights and wrested an empire from the French.

Joliet seems to have been none the less a student for all of his boyish activities. In the Department of Marine in Paris there is a remarkable map of the island of Anticosti and the Gulf of St. Lawrence, drawn by him when he was only thirteen. The work is carefully executed and the notes and legends indicate maturity and accurate observation. In 1662 he decided to become a Jesuit priest and took his minor orders in August of that year. He cultivated his talent for music and continued his classical course

by a study of philosophy. Four years later he is mentioned with special honor for his participation in a public debate in philosophy, at which the dignitaries of the colony were present and in which the Intendant, Talon himself, took part. The arguments were made in Latin and the disputants were confined to the syllogistic method.

During the following year Joliet, who had then reached his majority, was "clerk of the church" in the seminary. Father Jacques Marquette came to Quebec in September, 1666, and during the three weeks he tarried before going on to Three Rivers the two young men must have become well acquainted. Joliet, however, gave up his training for the priesthood about the time that Marquette entered upon his chosen field as a forest missionary, and in the summer of 1667, probably at the instigation of Talon and for the purpose of pursuing special studies in the Old World, he sailed for France.

After a happy year in the land of his fathers, Joliet returned to Quebec and began his career as explorer. Only the most resourceful, intrepid, and sturdy young men ventured upon that arduous calling. The successful *coureur de bois* had to know the craft of the wilderness — how to find his way in the depths of the forest; how to fashion shelter huts, weapons, and canoes; how to survive alone far from the base of supplies. He had to live with the Indians, interpret their moods, and speak their dialects. Above all, he had to be tactful, brave, and alert.



Commissioned by the Governor of New France to accompany Jean Péré on an expedition in search of fabulous boulders of pure copper on the shores of Lake Superior, Joliet plunged into the wilderness early in the spring of 1669 and was not heard of again until the following autumn. One day in September the Sieur de La Salle with his party of explorers and Sulpitian missionaries in search of a new route to the South Sea were amazed to hear of another Frenchman in a neighboring Indian village near the western end of Lake Ontario. It was Joliet on his way back to Quebec. He had failed to find the copper mines, but he had obtained precious knowledge of the region of the Great Lakes, had visited Green Bay, had won the friendship of the Indians, had made peace between the Iroquois and the Ottawas, and had discovered a new and less difficult route to the West by way of the Grand River and Lake Erie. For these services he was paid four hundred livres — not quite eighty dollars.

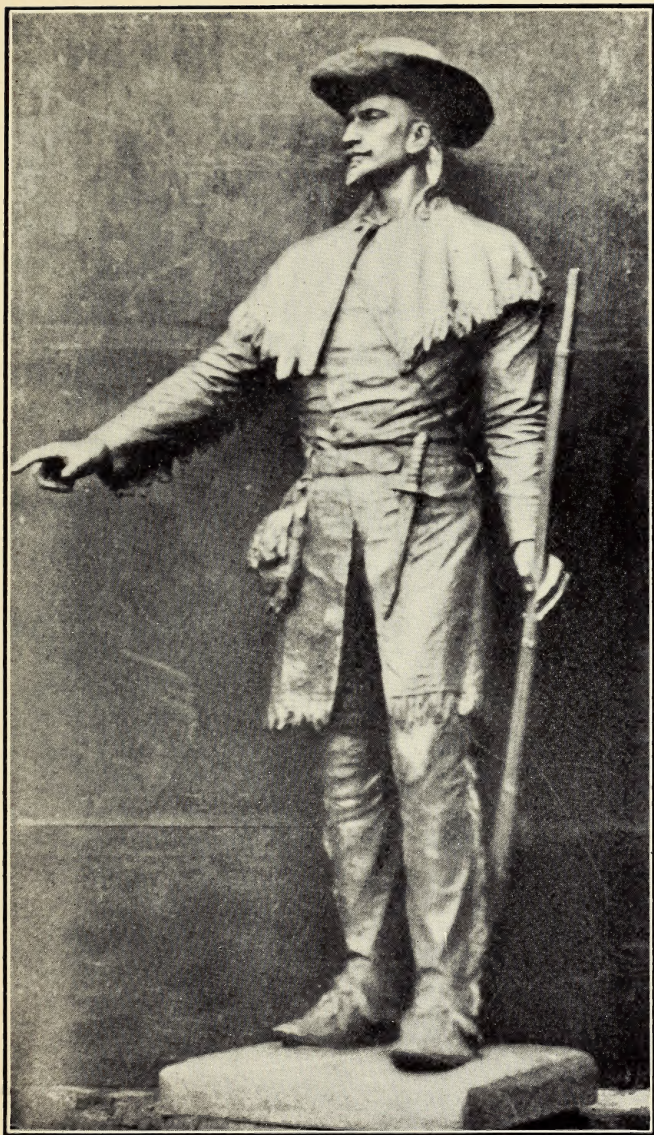
Late in the following year Joliet returned to the Great Lakes as a member of Saint-Lusson's pretentious expedition, and the early summer of 1671 found him at Sault Ste. Marie where a great concourse of Indians, priests, and soldiers had assembled to witness an imposing ceremony. There, on the fourteenth of June, he stood with a little group of Europeans surrounded by hundreds of dusky savages, their eyes wide with wonder, while Father Claude Dablon invoked a blessing upon the huge



wooden cross erected as a token of spiritual dominion. Saint-Lusson, lifting a sod and holding forth his sword, in the name of His Most Christian Majesty, Louis XIV of France, then took formal possession of all the territory from Hudson Bay to the South Sea and westward to the ocean — a realm of which none of them knew the extent. "*Vive le Roi!*" shouted the Frenchmen, and the Indians howled in concert.

One of the most alluring mysteries of the continent still remained unsolved. What was the "great water" to the west of which the Indians had told the explorers and missionaries, and whither did it flow? When Talon received instructions in 1672 to direct his attention to the exploration of the Mississippi as the most important project that could be undertaken in behalf of New France, his choice of a person to entrust with such a mission naturally fell to Louis Joliet, the brilliant young scholar whom he had sent to Europe six years before and who had since distinguished himself as a zealous and trustworthy explorer.

By November, after Talon had been recalled to France and Joliet was far on his way, the new Governor, Frontenac, wrote to the prime minister that he had "deemed it expedient for the service to send Sieur Joliet to discover the south sea by way of the country of the Maskoutens and the great river called Mississippi, which is believed to empty into the California sea. He is a man of experience in this kind of



LOUIS JOLIET





discovery and has already been near the great river, of which he promises to see the mouth." To his friend Father Marquette, who was patiently waiting at the mission of St. Ignace for an opportunity to visit the Indians who lived along the great river, Joliet carried instructions to accompany him on the voyage.

Slowly and apparently alone, Sieur Joliet paddled his birch-bark canoe up the turbulent Ottawa and Mattawan, laboriously he traversed the portage to Lake Nipissing, and finally emerging from its forested islands, gay with autumnal foliage, he rapidly descended the French River and floated out into the isle-strewn expanse of Georgian Bay. Weeks must have passed while he threaded that gloomy archipelago, genial October was succeeded by chill November, each morning when the traveller awakened beneath his shelter of boughs he found the damp mosses crisp under foot, while fitful winds laden with snowflakes whistled mournfully in the tree tops. To reach Mackinac before the ice blocked his passage the bold explorer must have taken many risks, for it was the eighth of December and floes were already forming in the straits when he beached his canoe at Point St. Ignace, embraced his priestly friend, and placed within his eager hands the fateful message which was to link their names upon a page of history.

All through the long winter Joliet and Marquette made careful preparations for their momentous ex-

ploration. On the seventeenth of May, 1673, the little party set out, and it was late in the autumn before Joliet, weary and travel-worn, pulled his canoe onto the beach at St. Ignace. Cold weather was at hand, so he spent the winter at the Mackinac settlement, writing his report to the Governor, drafting a map of the Illinois country, and preparing his journal of the voyage.

When spring came and the ice went out of the strait, he embarked upon the long trip back to Quebec. Week after week Joliet and his companions paddled homeward. At last they approached the town of Montreal and entered the troubled waters of La Chine Rapids — the last ordeal of the perilous journey. Many a time Joliet had passed those foam-covered rocks before, but the fates that day were capricious and overturned the light canoe. The men were thrown into the swift current and the box containing Joliet's precious map and his journal was deposited at the bottom of the river. Frantically, Joliet struggled against the tugging whirlpools until his strength was gone and he lost consciousness. Four hours his body tossed in the water when at last some fishermen pulled him out and brought him back to life. His French companions and the Indian lad, gift of the Indians in Iowa, were drowned.

The news of Joliet's discovery and the accident in the rapids preceded him to Quebec. When he finally entered his native town the church bells were rung and he was enthusiastically welcomed. After em-



bracing his mother and visiting a little with friends and relatives he hastened to make a verbal report to Governor Frontenac. Later he wrote a brief account of his voyage, the country he had explored, and the ease of establishing communication between the Great Lakes and the Gulf of Mexico. Accompanying this letter was a map of the region drawn from memory.

For several years the young explorer was haunted with the memory of the beautiful prairies, the luxuriant vegetation, the abundance of game, and the innumerable herds of bison which he had seen in the fertile valley of the great river. In 1676, the year following his marriage, he proposed to establish an agricultural colony in Illinois, believing that was the best method of maintaining the French claim to that region, but Paris officialdom vetoed it. Thereafter, for a time, he seems to have fallen into disfavor, perhaps because he was outspoken in opposition to the policy of supplying the Indians with liquor.

So ended the period of greatest accomplishment in the life of Louis Joliet, though for a quarter of a century longer he continued to occupy an important place in Canadian history. A man of scholarship and versatility (he played the cathedral organ between voyages), his whole career is one of remarkable achievement. In the Jesuit and official records of that time he is always referred to as a man of discretion, bravery, and unusual ability who might be trusted to do difficult work.



In 1679 Sieur Joliet was granted the *seigneurie* of the Mingan Islands, and later in the same year he made a survey of the region between the Saguenay River and James Bay, where he found the British firmly established. In return for his services he was given the island of Anticosti in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. There he went to live with his family and was growing wealthy when Sir William Phips appeared with his British fleet in 1690 and destroyed his establishment. A few years later he explored the coast of Labrador, made numerous maps, and studied the Eskimos and the resources of that country. In 1695 he went to France where he was received with honor and respect. When he returned to Quebec he was appointed royal professor of navigation and was given another *seigneurie* which bore his own name and which his descendants possess to this day.

Louis Joliet died sometime in the summer of 1700 — nobody knows just when or where or how. It is probable that the illustrious explorer met his end some place in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, where so often he had guided his boat on adventurous voyages. Perhaps his body rests on one of those rugged islands which the fogs envelop with a white shroud and whose shores reverberate incessantly with the cry of gulls and the thunder of billows.

JOHN ELY BRIGGS

## Comment by the Editor

### THE REDISCOVERY OF IOWA

During the eleven days from the seventeenth to the twenty-seventh of June, there occurred one of the most significant episodes in the recent history of Iowa — the celebration of the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the exploration of the Mississippi River by Louis Joliet and Father Marquette. The central feature of the event was a replica voyage from the mouth of the Wisconsin River to Montrose — a continuous pageant lasting ten days, extending over a stage two hundred and fifty miles long, and witnessed by great numbers of people in audiences sometimes of thousands and again composed of only a few uncomprehending clam muckers. At the end of the trip the visit of the Frenchmen to an Indian village in Iowa two centuries and a half ago was re-enacted, and the commemoration of the coming of the first white men was made the occasion for observing other events in the early history of this Commonwealth.

The significance of the celebration, however, lies not so much in the length of the replica voyage, the size of the pageants, or the cost of the whole enterprise as it does in the spontaneity with which the project began and the wide-spread interest it

aroused. The whole affair was the work of the "history fans" of Iowa, inspired by Ben Hur Wilson of Mount Pleasant, who sells insurance for a living and studies local history for pleasure. Wherever the proposed celebration was mentioned the community eagerly responded. Before the end of May cities and clubs were vying for a place on the program, so that it became a problem to accommodate all who wished to share in the observance of Iowa's oldest anniversary. For every task there were ready and willing hands. Finances took care of themselves. No individual, city, society, organization, or group dominated the celebration: it was thoroughly democratic — the culmination of a common impulse.

Scarcely less impressive is the unusual interest in Iowa history that the event engendered. To many people who had never heard of Father Marquette or his picturesque companion, Sieur Joliet, those names are now familiar. For some, the "Black-Robe chief, the Prophet" in Longfellow's *Song of Hiawatha* has become real and the poem has a new significance, for Father Marquette was that Black-Robe. Busy public officials, matter-of-fact business men, and energetic club women have haunted the libraries to learn of the adventurous Frenchmen who explored the Great Lakes and came into the Mississippi Valley seeking the Chinese Empire and a way to the sea. Newspapers have printed hundreds of columns concerning Joliet and Marquette and the recent reincarnation of those forgotten times. Far and wide



people of every station in life have learned of the discovery of Iowa, have caught a glimpse of the great valley as it was when the white men found it. The story has become common knowledge: the people of Iowa have come into a part of their rich heritage of the past.

The celebration of an event that occurred in Iowa two and a half centuries ago has done more than anything else to teach the people of this State that Iowa has a past — a past venerable in years and full of romance. The realm of Iowa history is broad and many fertile fields remain as yet uncultivated, their resources undeveloped and their potentiality unknown. There are more lessons to follow.

#### THE SPIRIT OF IOWA

Iowa has many distinctive characteristics — thrift, contentment, homogeneity, literacy, wealth — but one of the finest of all is Commonwealth consciousness. Perhaps it is the sum of them all. It is founded not upon climate or class or creed, but upon an all-pervading community of interests. Less than a year ago a cynical and superficial critic wrote that no one had yet been able “to rouse this people to a participation in any creative expression of the commonwealth” and concluded, “Seldom has a people been less interested in spiritual self-expression and more concerned with hog nutrition.” To such a libel the recent memorial celebration is the answer. It was the true expression of the spirit of Iowa — a

spontaneous, whole-hearted, unselfish response to a worthy enterprise.

In the years to come there will be many occasions for the recognition of important events, noble achievements, and glorious days in the history of this Commonwealth. Let there be similar demonstrations of the spirit of Iowa in the future. Let us maintain respect for our own institutions, let us write and read the story of our own State, let us compose our own music and create our own art, that the democracy of our fathers, the romance of our history, and the character of our prairies may live in the hearts of our people and find expression in the perpetuation of our native traits.

J. E. B.



# The **PALIMPSEST**

AUGUST 1923

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**PUBLISHED MONTHLY AT IOWA CITY BY**

**THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA**



## THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE

The PALIMPSEST, issued monthly by the State Historical Society of Iowa, is devoted to the dissemination of Iowa History. Supplementing the other publications of this Society, it aims to present the materials of Iowa History in a form that is attractive and a style that is popular in the best sense—to the end that the story of our Commonwealth may be more widely read and cherished.

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH

*Superintendent*

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## THE MEANING OF PALIMPSESTS

In early times palimpsests were parchments or other materials from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete; and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the records of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

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Iowa has not always  
smiled on her dreamers, her  
poets, her children with the divine  
fire in their souls. And yet I  
know that if the artist born in Iowa  
could only be allowed such a  
life of the soul as would  
impel him to respect his Iowa  
materials, and to ponder  
them long enough and  
deeply enough, every element  
of great art would be  
found here.

Herbert Quick



# THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY JOHN ELY BRIGGS

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## Restorer of Iowa Palimpsests

Lo, "a great prophet is risen up among us" who writes of folks — just Iowa folks! Herbert Quick, middle-aged and in the fullness of experience, has, in *Vandemark's Folly* and *The Hawkeye*, sent forth a message unto all the people, teaching them that the record of the generations of Iowa pioneers and frontiersmen who trailed their way over the Old Ridge Road to the Fort Dodge country and who erected the first shelters, scored the wonderful prairie sod, established townships, organized county government, and thus "set a-going" the society of the Commonwealth of Iowa, furnishes all the materials of great literature and every element of great art.

An artist and a scholar as well as a prophet and a teacher, Herbert Quick has with conscientious precision and with keen appreciation of their worth and dignity reconstructed and restored for us some of the palimpsest records of early Iowa — already

grown dim with the erasures of time and covered with the dust of decades.

Herbert Quick lays no claim to the title of historian or restorer of palimpsests, but modestly speaks of himself as "sitting in the wagon of history with my feet dangling down and facing the rear." And yet it is clear that he knows the road, and knows the people who have developed the country through which it winds from "things as raw and primitive as King Arthur's time" to a "region now as completely developed as England"—and all within the memory of men still living! He sees in this record a great achievement, and declares that "there never was such a thing in all the history of the world before."

The author himself and his two great books are at once the witness and the evidence of the beginning of things in Iowa—"the old, sweet, grand, beautiful things, the things which never can be again." Born in what he calls "the Ancient Greek period of mid-western life, when communities were set out as our farmers planted trees, by thrusting the twigs of cottonwood or willow or Lombardy poplar into the soil" where they were expected to grow, Herbert Quick remembers and understands the part played in the great drama of Iowa both by the generation of *Vandemark's Folly* who came "voluntarily" and by the generation of *The Hawkeye* who were "injected" into the body politic and "never saw anything else save the frontier, but who had spirits and

souls inherited from people who lived in the established societies of the East and of the South and of the Old World."

With masterful pen, with singular beauty of diction, often with epic rhythm and march, and again in the picturesque language of the period (for styles in speech, even in Iowa, come and go like the paper collar and the made-up bow tie), Herbert Quick restores the records of life in early Iowa with all the skill and fidelity of the classical scholar who reconstructs the original writings on old parchments by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts. And so we hail him as a restorer of Iowa palimpsests.

In *Vandemark's Folly* is reconstructed the glowing, throbbing story of the journey from the Dubuque Ferry, the gateway to the Land of Promise, over the Old Ridge Road, across the great green sea of the Iowa prairie—which was "the newest, strangest, most delightful, sternest, most wonderful thing in the world"—to "that holy wedlock which binds the farmer to the soil he tills." Then follows a faithful restoration of the record of that great experiment on the Iowa prairie of "building a democracy based on ponderous production" and of "keeping a people economically free while living an industrial and agricultural life and dependent on highways made by man instead of those created by nature."



Here in *Vandemark's Folly* is restored for all time the palimpsest of the prairie fire — the fire that came up from the west like a roaring tornado advancing in separate lines and columns and detachments like a burning army. One could see “the flames leap up, reach over, catch in front of the line, kindle a new fire, and again be overleaped by a new tongue of fire, so that the whole line became a belt of flames, and appeared to be rolling along in a huge billow of fire . . . . Sometimes a whole mile or so of the line disappeared as the fire burned down into lower ground; and then with a swirl of flame and smoke, the smoke luminous in the glare, it moved magnificently up into sight, rolling like a breaker of fire bursting on a reef of land, buried the hillside in flame, and then whirled on over the top, its streamers flapping against the horizon, snapping off shreds of flame into the air, as triumphantly as a human army taking an enemy fort!”

Here, too, in the same book is found a vivid record of the raging, howling, shrieking frontier blizzard, “the breath of which came with a roar and struck with a shiver”—but which can never come again for “every object that civilization and development have placed in the way of the wind prevents it.” Here is revealed one of the dangers in the life of the pioneer who, lost in two miles of snow between himself and the sun, plunges headlong into the drifts, flounders through them, and finally “cuffed and mauled by the storm” stumbles into a straw stack —

and safety — or sinks into the soft snow and is buried — a victim of the storm.

Is it possible for a people of a later day and a friendlier clime to comprehend the terrors of those winter storms of early Iowa? Herbert Quick's answer is contained in the pages of *Vandemark's Folly*:

“Then the snow, once lifted on the wings of the blast, became a part of the air, and remained in it. The atmosphere for hundreds of feet, for thousands of feet from the grassy surface of the prairie, was a moving cloud of snow, which fell only as the very tempest itself became over-burdened with it. As the storm continued, it always grew cold; for it was the North emptying itself into the South. . . .

“As the tumult grows hills are leveled, and hollows rise into hills. Every shed-roof is the edge of an oblique Niagara of snow; every angle the center of a whirlpool. If you are caught out in it, the Spirit of the Storm flies at you and loads your eyebrows and eyelashes and hair and beard with icicles and snow. As you look out into the white, the light through your bloodshot eyelids turns everything to crimson. Your feet lag, as the feathery whiteness comes almost to your knees. Your breath comes choked as with water. If you are out far away from shelter, God help you! You struggle along for a time, all the while fearing to believe that the storm which did not seem so very dangerous, is growing more violent, and that the daylight, which you thought would last

for hours yet, seems to be fading, and that night appears to be setting in earlier than usual. . . .

“You can not tell, when you try to look about you, what is sky and what is earth; for all is storm. You feel more and more tired. All at once, you find that the wind which was at your side a while ago, as you kept beating into it on your course toward help and shelter, is now at your back. Has the wind changed? No; it will blow for hours from the same quarter — perhaps for days! No; you have changed your course, and are beating off with the storm! This will never do: you rally, and again turn your cheek to the cutting blast: but you know that you are off your path; yet you wonder if you may not be going right — if the wind *has* changed; or if you have not turned to the left when you should have gone to the right.

“Loneliness, anxiety, weariness, uncertainty. An awful sense of helplessness takes possession of you. If it were daylight, you could pass around the deep drifts, even in this chaos; but now a drift looks the same as the prairie grass swept bare. You plunge headlong into it, flounder through it, creeping on hands and knees, with your face sometimes buried in the snow, get on your feet again, and struggle on.

“You know that the snow, finer than flour, is beating through your clothing. You are chilled, and shiver. Sometimes you stop for a while and with your hands over your eyes stand stooped with your back to the wind. You try to stamp your feet to



warm them, but the snow, soft and yielding, forbids this. You are so tired that you stop to rest in the midst of a great drift — you turn your face from the driving storm and wait. It seems so much easier than stumbling wearily on. Then comes the inrushing consciousness that to rest thus is to die. You rush on in a frenzy. You have long since ceased to think of what is your proper course,— you only know that you must struggle on. You attempt a shout; — ah, it seems so faint and distant even to yourself! No one else could hear it a rod in this raging, howling, shrieking storm, in which awful sounds come out of the air itself, and not alone from the things against which it beats. And there is no one else to hear.

“You gaze about with snow-smitten eyeballs for some possible light from a friendly window. Why, the sun itself could not pierce this moving earth-cloud of snow! Your feet are not so cold as they were. You can not feel them as you walk. You come to a hollow filled with soft snow. Perhaps there is the bed of a stream deep down below. You plunge into this hollow, and as you fall, turn your face from the storm. A strange and delicious sense of warmth and drowsiness steals over you; you sink lower, and feel the cold soft whiteness sifting over neck and cheek and forehead: but you do not care. The struggle is over; and—in the morning the sun glints coldly over a new landscape of gently undulating alabaster. Yonder is a little hillock which

marks the place where the blizzard overtook its prey. Sometime, when the warm March winds have thawed the snow, some gaunt wolf will snuff about this spot, and send up the long howl that calls the pack to the banquet."

*Vandemark's Folly* and *The Hawkeye* literally bulge with palimpsests of pioneer and frontier life in Iowa. Here are the records of the beginnings of political and social organization; of tragedies and comedies in that "strange drama we call self government;" of neighborhood meetings and blacksmith shop conferences where "the first prairie generation, bred of a line of foresters," solved their growing problems just as had the New England farmers on the Massachusetts frontier; of county politics in a later day with the "court house ring" in control and waxing fat on contracts for bridges that never were built and roads that were never improved.

There in *Vandemark's Folly* are reconstructed the parties and festivals of 1854 where the "John Aldens, the Priscillas, the Miles Standishes and the Dorothy Q's" of the frontier assembled in tight fitting corduroys and newly greased boots, in alpacas, delaines, figured lawns and calicoes, and "set a-going as great a society as the Pilgrim Fathers and Pilgrim Mothers: the society of the great commonwealth of Iowa." And here in *The Hawkeye* are the fashions that "made Beauty seductive in 1874"—hats which were "little affairs, brimless, not half large enough to cover their heads," and

dresses with skirts sweeping the grass and with bustles, basques, and polonaises.

Like old albums these books reveal types of the "leading citizens" in the frontier communities. Here, for example, is the real-estate dealer in his buckboard buggy measuring off the land by the revolving buggy wheel, extolling its virtues as he went, "no stumps, no stones, just the right amount of rainfall — the garden spot of the West . . . without a shadow of doubt the permanent county seat of the best county in Iowa, and that means the best in the known world!"

Here is the frontier doctor who lives above his own drug store, and who when called hurries down the stairs, sets his cases down on the sidewalk while he runs his buggy out of the shed and hitches up his horses, and then dashes off into the night, sometimes in time, sometimes too late to assist the "Mrs. Williams" or the "Mrs. Absalom Frosts" to usher into the world a future citizen of the Commonwealth of Iowa. Here is the pioneer preacher "laboring with his text, speaking in a halting manner, and once in a while bogging down in a dead stop out of which he could not pull himself without giving a sort of honk like a wild goose."

Here is the first lawyer, just out from Indiana by way of the Ohio and Mississippi, with his "long frock coat originally black, a white shirt, and a black cravat", with "his carpet bag and his law library", which, because "books are damned heavy" and law



books particularly so, consisted of *Blackstone's Commentaries*, *Chitty on Pleading*, the *Code of Iowa of 1851*, and "the *Session Laws* of the state so far as it had any session laws."

And here is the pioneer editor, "thick as thieves" with the county ring "as long as he had the county printing", whose "scurrilous paper" most people said "was never fit to enter a decent home, but which they always subscribed for and read as quick as it came!" Here is the story of love and courtship in the Neolithic period of Iowa culture when it was the accepted order "to git married early and stay married."

Such are the records of *Vandemark's Folly* and of *The Hawkeye*. In the pages of these books there is no attempt to glorify the extra legal methods sometimes resorted to in solving the perplexities and difficulties of frontier life, or to speak lightly of the hardships on the Iowa farm in the day of "bleak wastes, robber bands, and savage primitiveness;" there is no effort to minimize the perspiring job of the thrasher or the lame back and bleeding hands of the corn husker in a later day when the frontiersman "compromised on a half section" in "the Iowa style"; there is no ignoring the nightmare of the Iowa prairie farmer when "the prospect of money for the mortgage and the doctor's bill and the account at the store" was destroyed by the "rusting" of the wheat, or the sorrow of the Kate McConkeys who gave up their currant bushes and peonies to

try again as "Leaseholders"; there is no glossing over the old political party "way wise and broke nice", the "machine" scheming for the domination of the city which was to be, or the days of "easy money" for the "court-house ring" and the "regulars". And yet in the telling of these things by Herbert Quick there is none of the bitterness which is so often found in the tales of Hamlin Garland dealing with the people and lands to the east and west of the Iowa country; nor is there here any of that sneering cynicism with which Sinclair Lewis a generation later portrays life in the wheat country to the north. And because of the absence of the bitterness and the sneer *Vandemark's Folly* and *The Hawkeye* are nearer the truth and will live longer.

There is nothing finer in all the rapidly accumulating literature of mid-western America than Herbert Quick's tribute to the mothers of the frontiers in *The Hawkeye*:

"The mothers of the frontiers! They felt the oncoming of another day for their children. No life was so laborious, no situation so unpropitious, no poverty so deep that they did not through a divine gift of prophecy see beyond the gloom a better day for their children. In the smoky overheated kitchens, struggling to feed the 'gangs' of harvesters and thrashers, as they washed and mopped and baked and brewed and spun and wove and knit and boiled soap and mended and cut and basted and sewed and

strained milk and skimmed cream and churned and worked over butter, catching now and then an opportunity to read while rocking a child to sleep, drinking in once in a while a bit of poetry from the sky or the cloud or the flower; they were haloed like suns of progress for their families and for their nation, as they worked and planned and assumed for themselves a higher and higher culture of its sort — all for their children. We build monuments in the public square for the soldiers of our wars; but where is the monument for the Kate McConkeys who made possible so much of the good which is represented by the public square itself? Unless it is a monument not made with hands, in our hearts and souls, none can ever exist which can be in any way adequate.”

Whether the characters and the episodes in *Vandemark's Folly* and in *The Hawkeye* are drawn from actual history or from imagination, whether the names are real or fictitious, matters not. Faithfully, conscientiously, and understandingly the author has used them with a marvelous wealth of detail to tell of the beginnings of a great Commonwealth, and his work must be regarded as a very real contribution to the literature of Iowa history. For these books tell the truth — “not the truth of statistics, not just information, but the living truth” about Iowa folks. They are great books! So broad in their human sympathies, so deep in their penetration of life's realities that they belong to a literature that is universal.



Something of the author's own experience and background for the writing of these books may be gleaned from *The Hawkeye* in the story of Fremont McConkey — the country boy whom Herbert Quick knew the best of all — the boy of the early Iowa farm with the poet's soul longing for self expression. Fed on a diet of "warmed-over English literature, which Americans who should have known better laid before him", and "taught by every one in speech and printed page that he is outside the realm of 'material' for literature", he dreamed of a day when he might know first-hand something of "Scottish moors" and "ruined abbeys", and of the wonderful world of "Dashing Charlie" and other glorious heroes with which the writers of the *New York Weekly* seemed so familiar.

Steeped in the beauty and wonder of the prairie, and with flashes of realization of the dramatic elements in the shifting, stirring episodes of its rapid transformation, Fremont McConkey had the growing conviction that he could write, if — *if*. But who would want to read about Iowa? If this were only a mountain country, or a stern and rock-bound coast, one might make a story of it! If it were only a land of clashing shields, or at least a place where judges wore robes! But what was there in Iowa or in the lives of Iowa people for a writer? Could romance be found on the prairies, in humble country homes, in fields of wheat and corn, in small towns, in township caucuses, or in county court-houses?

With an understanding heart and with the authority of one who has received the acclaims of popular favor as well as the approval of the critics, Herbert Quick answers the Fremont McConkeys — the dreamers and poets of Iowa with “the divine fire in their souls.” I KNOW THAT IF THE ARTIST BORN IN IOWA COULD ONLY BE ALLOWED SUCH A LIFE OF THE SOUL AS WOULD IMPEL HIM TO RESPECT HIS IOWA MATERIALS, AND TO PONDER THEM LONG ENOUGH AND DEEPLY ENOUGH, EVERY ELEMENT OF GREAT ART WOULD BE FOUND HERE.

In *Vandemark's Folly* Uncle Jacob Vandemark calls his story the “History of Vandemark Township”; and in *The Hawkeye* Fremont McConkey tells us that his story is “The History of Monterey County.” There are ninety-nine counties in Iowa and some sixteen hundred townships! What a field for the restorers of palimpsests and the writers of history! What a field for the “Gertrudes” who “went East to Vassar and joined the Daughters of the American Revolution!” What a field for the “Paul Holbrooks” just back from the State University with ideals of public service “and against the County Ring!” What a field for the schools and colleges! What a field for poets and dreamers!

Herbert Quick, prophet and restorer of Iowa palimpsests, has pointed the way!

BERTHA M. H. SHAMBAUGH

## An Iowa Doone Band

About forty years ago there flourished, in the rugged, heavily-wooded fastnesses of the Iowa River in Hardin County, a daring and unscrupulous band of outlaws. Like the famous robber Doones in the tale of "Lorna Doone", these Iowa desperadoes terrorized the law-abiding people of the community by cunning thievery and bold disturbance of the peace. They held sway not so much by the enormity of their atrocities as by the fear of the crimes they might commit.

As the Doones of old England found security in a natural stronghold, so the Rainsbargers of pioneer Iowa made their headquarters in secluded gullies that were seldom visited by others than their clan. Their remote cabins, half concealed by the trees and the semi-gloom of the deep hollows, could be reached only by lonely byways that led through thick woods and along the edges of dark, sheer-cut ravines. Even to-day the dense underbrush grows so close to the road that it scrapes the sides of a passing vehicle, and the heavy gold of autumn sunlight that pours through the crimson sumach leaves quickly fades to muffling dusk in mid-afternoon. In the early eighties only the most daring men ever ventured upon a night ride through this section of the country.



A story is told of an Ackley doctor who was visited one stormy night by a stranger who begged him to attend a sick woman, requesting, however, that the doctor consent to follow him blindfolded. Persuaded by the man's distress, the doctor accompanied his guide to a squalid home where the family lived in apparent poverty. He refrained from asking for his services a charge which evidently could not be met, but the man paid him liberally from a large roll of soiled bills. A few days later, when the doctor returned to see his patient, searching out the cabin by an obscure path, he found the house deserted. Shortly afterward, a rumor was circulated that a band of stolen horses which had been secreted in the caves among the hills had just been sent down the river, and that the thieves with the proceeds of this sale had decamped.

In this secluded river country the scene of this story is laid. Ever since the Rainsbargers held sway there the inaccessible region has maintained its mysterious privacy. To this day the steep slopes, thickly wooded with oaks and scattered birch, and the winding river walled in by a heavy growth of cottonwoods and grapevine tangles, which formed the setting for a tragic incident in the big drama of the Middle West, remain unchanged — inescapably suggestive of the Rainsbarger bandits and the outlaw Doones.

The entire family of Rainsbargers — William, Finley, Frank, Nathan, and Emmanuel; and Wil-

liam's boys, George, Joe, and John — were all reputed to be fearless freebooters. Their reputation for high-handed misconduct invited accusation of every crime committed in the neighborhood — sometimes perhaps unjustly. They were charged with such malicious offenses as cutting off cows' tails and hamstringing horses. They were said to steal cattle and horses and dispose of them at markets down the river. Sometimes stock was poisoned or brazenly driven off before the eyes of the helpless owner. A farmer declared that one day as he was picking corn, Fin Rainsbarger drove into the field, loaded his wagon with corn, and calmly departed. The outlaws had learned that it was safe to rely upon their reputations to prevent resistance.

The most generally hated and feared of the Rainsbarger family was Fin. He was more than a robber. On a winter evening of 1866 in the town of Steamboat Rock he had stabbed and killed a man during a quarrel — the first murder committed in Hardin County. Those who witnessed the deed said that the victim, Charles Voiles, was intoxicated at the time, that he threatened Rainsbarger and his brother-in-law, Henry Johns, and finally struck a drunken blow. Like a flash, before anyone could intervene, the tawny-haired Rainsbarger drove a butcher knife into the man's heart. Convicted of manslaughter, in spite of the best efforts of his attorney, H. L. Huff, he was sentenced to the penitentiary for six years; but at the end of thirteen

months he was pardoned because it was claimed that he had acted in self-defense. Later he was known to have been associated with several notorious outlaws, among whom was Enoch Johnson, the renegade father-in-law of Frank Rainsbarger.

Some of the Rainsbargers, however, were said to be "hard-working men, who had never been arrested or indicted for any crime or misdemeanor". William was president of the school board in his township for a number of years. Probably other men of questionable character were guilty of some of the evil charged against the Rainsbargers, but the people of the community believed, and are still convinced, that the Rainsbargers were a family of criminals and villains who were chiefly responsible for the lawless reign of the eighties. The score of petty molestations attributed to them prepared the way for a reckoning when an offense audacious enough to arouse the whole community demanded amends. The public was ready and eager to convict the Rainsbargers as the embodiment of all the crime in Hardin County.

In the early eighties a counterfeiting scheme was instituted into which were drawn many people, both reputable and disreputable. Enoch Johnson became an active member of the gang. It was his business to transfer the money made in Steamboat Rock to a confederate outside the State. He was finally apprehended, however, with a box of the money in his possession, arrested by Federal officers,



and indicted by a grand jury of which Henry Johns was foreman. Frank Rainsbarger, at the entreaty of his wife, Nettie, went bail for the temporary release of his father-in-law.

There was little joy in Enoch Johnson's homecoming, however, for he discovered that his wife, Mag, had sold their household goods during his detention in jail. The two immediately quarrelled, and Johnson went to live with Frank and Nettie. He urged his son-in-law and Nathan Rainsbarger, who made his home with Frank, to take out insurance on his life. Mag Johnson was the beneficiary of more than one such policy already, Johnson carried some insurance in favor of Nettie, and Frank was induced to secure a five thousand dollar policy, payable jointly to himself and wife.

Of course Johnson was not the only counterfeiter in the county. As soon as he was indicted efforts were made to persuade him to turn state's evidence against his confederates. The identity of other parties to the fraud was a mystery but there was reason to suspect that the Rainsbargers were implicated more or less directly. It was hinted that perhaps a threat from Johnson to expose those as guilty as himself had been the most effective inducement for Frank to furnish bail. Yet the fact that Henry Johns, a relative of the Rainsbargers, took the lead in trying to expose the counterfeiters would seem to indicate that the Rainsbargers were not members of the bogus gang — but maybe Johns did

not know what he was about. There is also a story to the effect that while Johnson was at liberty on bail he quarrelled with the chief of the counterfeiters who, fearing disclosure of the scheme, promised Johnson that if he peached there would not be enough left of him to feed the crows.

On the evening of November 18, 1884, while driving from Steamboat Rock toward Gifford, Enoch Johnson was killed. When he was found, within a mile of Gifford, appearances indicated that there had been a breakdown which shattered his buggy and that afterward he had attempted to ride his horse but had been thrown and dragged for some distance. His body lay about a quarter of a mile from the buggy, the lines were wrapped around one leg, and his clothes were pulled over his head. There was blood on the horse's withers.

The following morning Mag Johnson arrived unexpectedly at the home of Frank and Nettie Rainsbarger. She had gone to Ackley the day before, where she spent the night at the Revere House with Joshua West. About noon she received a telegram from West stating that her husband had met with an accident and was dead. She showed neither surprise nor sorrow at the news.

At first the opinion prevailed that Johnson's death was accidental, but at the coroner's inquest several suspicious circumstances were revealed which pointed to foul play. Two days after Johnson was killed the sheriff, W. V. Willcox, and the coro-

ner, Dr. Myron Underwood, visited the scene of the tragedy and found where a single horse had been hitched at the head of a ravine about sixty-five rods from the broken buggy; a few feet away the grass was trampled down and spattered with blood; the buggy had not moved after the wheel broke down; and a post mortem examination revealed that the victim's head had been fractured on both sides, which could scarcely have been accomplished by a fall from his horse. The coroner's jury decided that "Enoch Johnson came to his death by blows inflicted upon the head by some blunt instrument in the hands of some person or persons unknown".

So the matter stood. No arrests were made and Frank and Nettie Rainsbarger took steps to obtain their life insurance. Several times during the following weeks Mag Johnson came to visit her daughter and, after repeated persuasion, took her to Eldora where they made affidavits, on the strength of which Frank and Nate Rainsbarger were arrested and charged with the murder of Enoch Johnson.

Shortly after the preliminary hearing, Henry Johns publicly declared his conviction that the two men were not guilty. He was sure that Johnson had been murdered to prevent him from exposing the gang of counterfeiters. "I will stay by you until you are cleared and the real culprits are brought to justice," he is reported to have promised Nate and Frank, "if it costs fifty thousand dollars." The prisoners were bound over to appear at the



next term of the district court which would convene late in April, 1885.

On the night of April 16th, while driving home from Abbott Station, Johns himself was shot and injured so that he died within three weeks. He recognized several of his assailants and made a sworn statement of their names before he died. This statement was filed, without having been made public, in the office of the county clerk at Eldora, but it was taken from the files and could never be found. Perhaps the complete solution of the whole mystery was thereby lost forever. It is significant that no one was ever indicted for the murder of Henry Johns. Though Governor William Larrabee, nearly four years afterward, offered a five hundred dollar reward for the conviction of the guilty persons the bounty was never claimed.

Meanwhile the Rainsbargers had secured a change of venue to Marshall County and Nate's trial was set for December 28th. Great excitement prevailed in Hardin County. Counterfeiting frauds were forgotten while the counterfeiters undertook to allay suspicion of themselves by joining noisily with the outraged citizens to revenge the murder of Johnson and Johns and to exterminate the criminal element in the county. To that end a vigilance society was organized and thereafter the exploits of the vigilantes rivaled the notoriety of the outlaws.

On the night of June 3rd Dr. Underwood, who as coroner had incurred the enmity of the Rains-

bargers, was attacked by three or four masked men on a lonely road near the Iowa River. Several shots were fired and one bullet passed through the doctor's coat. He returned the fire. Just then two buggies drove up. Surprised at the sudden arrival of reinforcements the desperadoes disappeared down a ravine. The next day warrants were issued for the arrest of Ed Johns and William, Fin, and Manse Rainsbarger. Johns could not be found, William Rainsbarger was released on bail, while Fin and Manse were locked in the Eldora jail.

Thoroughly incensed by the series of murders and assaults that had occurred, impatient with the delay and uncertainty of judicial proceedings, and determined to inspire terror among evildoers by a striking example of sure retribution, a mob, led no doubt by the vigilantes, gathered that night near Eldora, deliberately entered the town, battered open the jail with a huge tree trunk, and attacked the two Rainsbargers. They resisted desperately. Manse was shot in his cell but Fin fought his way through the door, only to die at the hands of the mob outside. Then the lynchers dispersed unmolested, leaving the bodies of the two men lying in the jail yard riddled with bullets — a gruesome sight for the eyes of the curious who came the next morning to see them.

The case charging William Rainsbarger and Ed Johns with the crime for which their alleged accomplices were lynched was finally dismissed in 1889

because there was not enough evidence against them to justify further prosecution. A sworn statement has since been made that the whole affair was planned and executed by the vigilance society, of which many prominent citizens were members, for the very purpose of arousing the public to rid the county of the Rainsbargers.

It was a little over a year after the murder of Enoch Johnson that Nate Rainsbarger was brought to trial. Of medium height and powerful physique, his hair black and abundant, and his eyes dark and piercing, he seemed none the worse for his long confinement as he sat with his attorneys calmly confronting the prosecution led by H. L. Huff, the man who had defended his brother against a charge of murder twenty years before.

The State began with the testimony of Dr. N. C. Morse, corroborated by Dr. Underwood, that the murdered man had died from wounds inflicted upon his head before he fell from the horse — wounds which might have been made by brass knuckles in the hands of a powerful man. A witness was found who had heard screams in the vicinity of the tragedy between eight and nine o'clock on the fatal evening. Others claimed to have seen Nate and Frank Rainsbarger, identified by the light of a bonfire, as they drove south through Eldora about an hour before the screams were heard on the Gifford road. One man asserted that he had overheard the Rainsbargers plotting to put Johnson out of the way.



Against this purely circumstantial evidence the defense undertook to prove an alibi. The Rainsbargers secured witnesses who had seen them in Cleves, about ten miles from Eldora, as late as seven o'clock on the day of the murder, and others, mostly relatives, who confirmed the declaration of Nate and Frank that after leaving Cleves they had collected some money from a neighbor for thrashing, had stopped at the Johns place, had later called on their brother Fin to get him to help husk corn, and had finally reached home after eleven o'clock. It was a plausible story but the prosecution immediately introduced testimony impeaching the reputation of the defense witnesses for truth and veracity.

Day after day, as the trial continued, sentiment against the defendant increased, and the popular opinion that the Rainsbargers were guilty became more and more firmly established. It was for Nettie Rainsbarger, sister-in-law of the accused, to contribute the most damaging evidence of all. Pretty, ladylike, and composed, she made a very favorable impression despite her ill repute as she described the dramatic events on the morning following the murder. "Mercy sakes, Nate, where did you get that blood?" she recalled having exclaimed. Nate grabbed the lapel of his coat, she related, and drew it over the blood spot. "It is not blood; it is water or horse slobbers", he said as he rushed out of the room. Later she found blood on her husband's overcoat and mittens: it stained her finger when

she touched the spots. Then she remembered that Frank had taken his brass knuckles when he started for Cleves the previous afternoon. When she accused the men of murdering her father they became very irritated and tried to make her believe that the horse had killed him.

The trial lasted fourteen days. On January 13, 1886, the jury returned a verdict of murder in the first degree and recommended a sentence of imprisonment for life.

During the months that followed while Frank and Nate lay in the Marshall County jail—the one awaiting trial and the other an appeal to the Supreme Court—various untoward events continued to agitate the people of Hardin County. Joe Rainsbarger was indicted and later he was convicted of malicious mischief in shooting out the eyes of cattle owned by a neighbor. While that case was pending he was arrested for shooting at a man. Released on five hundred dollars bail he was eventually convicted and served ten months in jail. In April his father and Ed Johns were indicted for the attack on Dr. Underwood, who had become State Senator in the meantime. During the summer the Eldora jail was again mobbed by the vigilantes, but this time the marshal succeeded in dispersing the mob. In September a man who stayed with Mrs. Fin Rainsbarger was chased out of the county for stealing a horse.

Frank Rainsbarger was put on trial for the mur-

der of Enoch Johnson in February, 1887, and was convicted on March 10th. Five days later he entered the penitentiary at Anamosa under a life sentence. While Frank's trial was in progress the Supreme Court reversed the decision by which Nate had been convicted, because Nettie Rainsbarger had been allowed to testify as to his bad character and the commission of crimes for which he was not on trial. He was retried in November, again convicted, and followed his brother into the penitentiary on December 10, 1887.

Meanwhile William, Joe, George, and John Rainsbarger were arrested for assaulting a man who had testified against Joe in a recent trial. They narrowly escaped being lynched and were taken to Marshalltown for protection. Two months later they were acquitted.

It was nearly twenty-eight years after Nate and Frank entered the penitentiary when the door of the prison swung open and the two men, white haired and prison-paled, once more breathed the air of freedom and walked into the sunlight not striped with the shadows of prison bars. For more than a quarter of a century they had borne the stigma of convicts, during all that time they had steadfastly maintained that they were tricked into prison to protect the real murderer, and by their good conduct they had convinced the prison officials of their innocence. As the years passed the desire to avenge the death of their mob-murdered brothers and to



punish the people responsible for their own imprisonment had grown upon them. Now, as old men, they were free. Not quite. Their liberty was contingent upon their not intimidating "by word or threat any of those who were instrumental in their conviction" or who had "opposed their release in past years." They have never violated that pledge. Frank found employment with a construction company in Ackley and Nate went to work in a Marshalltown factory.

This is Iowa's Doone story. In vivid contrast to the lawless, counterfeiting days, peace and order now prevail in Hardin County and the turbulence of the eighties is only a dim tradition. And yet, in a narrow valley between the folds of two hills, where the country road is steep and tortuous and the bridges are old and rickety, a forgotten relic of the horse-stealing days may still be seen. There, half concealed by the cottonwoods and underbrush, is an old dilapidated stable. The thatched roof over a small dugout slopes down from the side of the hill and is supported by two growing trees. The door hangs by its rusty padlock but swings free from the broken hinges, and inside an old-fashioned sofa, with the twisted springs protruding, and the shell of a blue water pail evidence the necessities of an outlaw stable guard.

JOCELYN WALLACE

## Comment by the Editor

### HISTORICAL FICTION

Historical fiction is a paradox on the face of it. History can not be fictitious or it ceases to be history. Yet probably no historian has ever succeeded in telling the whole truth. Some facts in the annals of mankind are unknown and thousands of others are necessarily suppressed—for lack of space if for no better reason. On the other hand the writers of fiction have seldom if ever succeeded in eliminating the elements of time and place. Perhaps an exception should be made of some of Poe's stories, but a novel without a setting is inconceivable. The fidelity with which the novelist portrays the historical background is to a large extent the measure of the reality of the tale, while disregard for the facts of time and place is the highway to fairy-land and fantasy.

Where is the boundary line between the realms of fact and fancy? It is not always easy to locate, but the best guide seems to be the purpose of the writer. The historian should be judged by historical standards, while the novelist may be permitted to "throw the graces of fiction over the sharp, hard facts that historians have labouriously gathered", as Gertrude Atherton admits she did in *The Conqueror*. A

novel should never be treated as history, for its object is not to teach facts but to picture life artistically. Fiction should be judged only as literature.

#### THE RESPONSIBILITY OF NOVELISTS

While it would be absurd to depend upon the Waverley novels for a true conception of medieval England or to study the Civil War in *The Crisis*, there is no denying that such books have served to vitalize the times with which they deal. The manners and customs of people form the warp and woof of the literary fabric: the plot is only the pattern. The setting of a novel conscientiously drawn and characters portrayed true to type may contribute a clear understanding of folks and things as they were; but let the book be carelessly written and a false impression is made which history can never correct. The vivid imagery of a novel can not be erased at will and supplanted by the dimly remembered and unrelated facts of formal history.

It behooves the writers of fiction to have a care for the injustice they may do to the past and the harm they may cause in the present. Abbie Gardner Sharp maintained that the Spirit Lake Massacre might never have occurred if her mother had not obtained an erroneous notion of Indian character from reading "so much of James Fenimore Cooper down there in New York". If her faith in the honor of savages had been founded on facts she would not have prevailed on her husband to admit Inkipaduta's



Indians into the cabin on that fateful evening in March, 1857. Whether or not resistance would have materially altered the course of events is a question, but the incident is a striking illustration of the powerful influence of fiction.

#### THE REALISM OF HERBERT QUICK

Few novelists have been more faithful to facts than Herbert Quick in *The Hawkeye*. The characters are essentially true to type, the conversation is replete with half-forgotten colloquial expressions of the past generation, and the splendid descriptions are vivid because they are real. Some critics will say there are too many pages of color and complain of the leisurely digressions, but those who remember Iowa as it was in the seventies will revel in the reminiscent descriptions of thrashing and corn husking, of gopher snaring and prairie chicken shooting, and of Fourth of July celebrations in the days of horses and buggies. The novel is redolent of the prairies and the people of Iowa fifty years ago. Therein is the charm of the book.

Convinced of the elements of great art in Iowa materials, Mr. Quick has found it unnecessary to distort the facts for the sake of sensational circumstances or dramatic episodes. Many years ago he investigated the system of political "boodle" in Woodbury County and discovered, among other irregularities, that in "some cases the approaches to bridges were built and charged twice, once to the

road fund and once to the bridge fund. The man who did the work got one payment and the grafters got the other." Compare that commentary with this from *The Hawkeye*: "Paul read the statement of a man who had at the request of a county supervisor, put in duplicate bills for making approaches to bridges, one bill in each case against the bridge-fund for the supervisor and another against the road-fund for himself." The Monterey County "Ring" is no myth.

The terrific climax of the book, describing the lynching of Pitt and Bowie Bushyager, is a remarkably accurate account of what actually happened to Manse and Fin Rainsbarger in Eldora on the night of June 4, 1885. The Bushyagers of *The Hawkeye* are unmistakably the Rainsbargers of reality whose true history may be read in the story of "An Iowa Doone Band".

*The Hawkeye* is epical.

J. E. B.







# The **P**ALIMPSEST

SEPTEMBER 1923

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THE EDITOR

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## THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE

The PALIMPSEST, issued monthly by the State Historical Society of Iowa, is devoted to the dissemination of Iowa History. Supplementing the other publications of this Society, it aims to present the materials of Iowa History in a form that is attractive and a style that is popular in the best sense—to the end that the story of our Commonwealth may be more widely read and cherished.

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH

*Superintendent*

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## THE MEANING OF PALIMPSESTS

In early times palimpsests were parchments or other materials from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete; and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the records of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

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# THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY JOHN ELY BRIGGS

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## The Early Iowans

The advisability of dividing the Territory of Wisconsin and erecting the Territory of Iowa was being discussed in Congress on June 5, 1838. Representative Charles Shepard of North Carolina, who seemed to be the leader of the opposition, was skeptical of the necessity for a new Territory and out of sympathy with the whole westward movement. Indeed, he was of the opinion that the desire for a new government west of the Mississippi came chiefly from those who wanted to speculate in the "fresh and rich" lands of the region, and from politicians who favored the creation of "a batch of new offices". But in any event, since Mr. Shepard felt constrained to give the project his most "zealous opposition", some of his statements may with propriety be quoted as reflecting views relative to the character of the early settlers of Iowa.

"But who are these", he asked, "that are dissatisfied with our legislation, and pray for the establish-

ment of a new Territory? Individuals who have left their own homes, and seized on the public land. As soon as Black Hawk and his warriors were driven from their hunting grounds, before the country was surveyed or a land office opened, these men pounced on the choicest spots, cut down the timber, built houses, and cultivated the soil as if it was their own property." He pointed out that, "without the authority of law, and in defiance of the Government, they have taken possession of what belongs to the whole nation". They were the people, he continued, "who require a governor and council, judges, and marshals, when every act of their lives is contrary to justice, and every petition which they make is an evidence of their guilt and violence. We, who are insulted, whose authority is trampled under foot, are asked for new favors and privileges; the makers and guardians of the law are approached by its open contemners, and begged to erect these modest gentlemen into a dignified Government. The gravity and insolence of this application would excite laughter, if the last ten years had not presented too many instances of a like spirit and character; individuals and masses of people in every part of this favored country begin to look beyond the law, to despise the constituted authorities, to consider their own feelings and passions as the standard of public duty, and too often men in high places have connived at their proceedings."

The manner in which new sovereignties were cre-

ated was also described. "These poachers take the public land, and humbly pray for the right of pre-emption; this yielded, they call the Government a step-mother, and demand various grants and immunities; then they force themselves into the Union, without complying with the act of Congress, and, reaching the climax of impudence, they boldly threaten to deprive the old States of all share in the national domain. But we are asked, what must be done? Twenty thousand people are living on the west side of the Mississippi, and the whole army of the United States could not drive them from their settlements."

Mr. Shepard was prophetic in his declaration that if "the Territory of Iowa be now established, it will soon become a State; if we now cross the Mississippi, under the bountiful patronage of this Government, the cupidity and enterprise of our people will carry the system still further, and ere long the Rocky Mountains will be scaled, and the valley of the Columbia be embraced in our dominion. This, then, is the time to pause, to gather the results of previous experience, and to consider the influence of this legislation on the character of the people and the durability of our institutions."

The establishment of the new Territory was also emphatically opposed by John C. Calhoun in the Senate, who, like Representative Shepard, saw the matter from the sectional point of view — more free States were not desired when the balance of power



was already against the South. Mr. Calhoun had heard that "the Ioway country had been already seized on by a lawless body of armed men, who had parcelled out the whole region, and had entered into written stipulations to stand by and protect each other, and who were actually exercising the rights of ownership and sovereignty over it — permitting none to settle without their leave, and exacting more for the license to settle, than the Government does for the land itself."

Henry Clay of Kentucky was of a similar opinion, based largely upon the field notes of the surveyors of the Black Hawk Purchase who stated that "the land was generally settled by armed intruders," and that their progress in the work was materially hindered "by the opposition and threats of this description of persons." Mr. Clay waxed sarcastic, declaring that in all probability there were members in both houses who were ready to pronounce that "a more honest, deserving set of men," did not exist: these men who openly flouted authority and "whose moral sense would be violated by an enforcement" of the law. As for himself he would like to know what "pretence had these lawless men for roving about the country and seizing by violence on the choicest spots of land?"

Mr. Clay desired that these lands be offered for sale and then if necessary the existing laws should be enforced. If need be he favored the removal of "these lawless intruders from the property they

have forcibly appropriated to their own use. What right had they to the public domain more than any other description of plunderers to the goods they may seize upon?" Since they "are honest, industrious men, who are unable to give the real value for the goods, they have taken this natural and harmless method of getting possession of them."

Not all in Congress, however, were of the same mind. The opposition to the creation of the Territory of Iowa and the passage of the Preëemption Act was easily overcome in both houses, the true character of the pioneers being too well known for much credence to be placed in the caustic remarks of southern statesmen.

One of the most ardent supporters of the Iowa settlers was Senator Lucius Lyon of Michigan who was familiar with conditions in the Iowa country and knew the workings of the claim associations in his own State. He was too well impressed with the character of the Iowa settlers "to believe, for a moment, that any person going there with the intention of becoming an actual settler in the country would be treated badly by those who had gone before him."

Senator Clement C. Clay of Alabama also took issue with those who maligned the settlers of the West. He severely criticized the Senator from Kentucky for picking out "some isolated cases of alleged resistance to the public officers, among the vast number of those who had settled on the public

domain". Indeed, he was of the opinion that if "a single individual, or even a dozen of them, in Iowa or Wisconsin, should manifest any hostility to the officers of the Government" it was insufficient reason for withholding the benefits of the preëmption bill from the "thousands of industrious and meritorious claimants".

The early settlers of Iowa were not only maligned by Congressmen — probably for political reasons — but also by others who had less opportunity of knowing their real character. Charles Augustus Murray, a noted English traveller, wrote in 1835 that Keokuk was "the lowest and most blackguard place" that he had visited. Its population was said to be composed chiefly of watermen who were "a coarse and ferocious caricature of the London bargemen, and their chief occupation" seemed to consist in "drinking, fighting, and gambling". It seems that one of the residents was rather proud of having shot an Indian, saying that he would "as soon shoot an Indian as a fox or an otter." The Englishman summed up the matter by remarking that this "murderer is called a Christian, and his victim a heathen". At Dubuque the barroom "was crowded with a parcel of blackguard noisy miners", from whom the most experienced blasphemers might have taken a lesson. It may be remarked, however, that the true character of a people can scarcely be studied with accuracy by viewing the denizens of public drinking places.

Drinking in those early days was not considered



an offense against society. As one writer put it, the "early settlers in Iowa, as well as in other Territories, drank a great deal of liquor. On the way to weddings, house raisings, and other gatherings, the bottle was passed liberally, and was used frequently during the ensuing program. With the advance of civilization the custom became less prevalent."

When the fierce heat of the summer had produced an abundance of malaria, ague, chills, and fever the life of the pioneer was indeed miserable. Cure-alls, however, were usually at hand. "Quinine was the standard medicine of the pioneer household for every known ailment, except rattle-snake bites, which called for whisky in generous doses. A family could get along very well without butter, wheat bread, sugar or tea, but whisky was as indispensable to house-keeping as corn meal, bacon, coffee, tobacco, and molasses."

It was said that upon one occasion an old settler ran out of this essential in the family commissary department, and walked ten miles to borrow a new supply from a good old deacon. But the deacon was short on "groceries" himself, as there had recently been a wedding in the family. He was "powerful sorry" that he could not fill his neighbor's jug—"but you see", said he, "I have only got a gallon left, and you know that won't any more than run our prayer meeting Wednesday night."

Perhaps a more trustworthy picture of the early pioneers may be gained from a description of their

activities which reveal men of strong character and a law-abiding nature. It is true that the usual frontier crimes — horse-stealing, murder, and counterfeiting — existed, but not with tolerance. Early Iowa history is replete with accounts of popular opposition to such offenses, even prior to the establishment of a well organized government.

The pioneers of Iowa possessed an inherent talent for constitutional government, though extralegal methods were sometimes employed to obtain it. Those "blackguard" miners of Dubuque as early as 1830 appointed a committee of five to draft the rules and regulations under which they were to be governed. The meeting of these committeemen may be called our first constitutional convention. Furthermore, the formation of hundreds of land clubs or claim associations bespeaks the early settler's desire for law and order: the desire for peace and orderly procedures even if he had to fight for them.

These claim associations appear to have been very effective in preventing any serious trouble in the matter of claim-jumping, although some rather tense situations were produced. Following the removal of the Indians in 1833, hundreds of settlers immediately flocked into the Iowa country and while each selected a place that suited him best, the new arrivals in most instances respected the premises of those who had preceded. What constituted a "claim" was generally understood and, although the region was not legally open to settlement, "a claim to a farm,



regularly established" was held to be just as good for the time being, "as if the occupant had the Government patent for it." The emigrant came into the country, looked around him, and, selecting a location that pleased him, he staked out his half section of land, one quarter section probably being woodland and the other prairie. The prospective settler then went to work, built a house, fenced, plowed, and planted a piece of ground, and his home was "secure from trespass by any one whatever, until the Government shall think proper to prefer its claims."

The early settlers were not greedy — they merely asked of the government that they be allowed to buy part of a section at the regular price of \$1.25 an acre without having it exposed to public sale. "This privilege has been considered as justly due to the settler, in consideration of the increased value given to other lands around him, at the expense of great toil and privation to himself." The pioneers did not claim the "privilege of thus buying unreasonably large bodies of land;" only asking "to have extended to them the same advantages as have been granted to all pioneers before them". If more than the usual amount of land was desired they were ready to compete for it in the open market.

Lieutenant Albert M. Lea's *Notes on Wisconsin Territory*, published in 1836, vividly describes conditions in the "Iowa District". He wrote of the groves of oak, elm, and walnut, "half shading half concealing", the "neat hewed log cabins of the emi-



grants with their fields stretching far into the prairies, where their herds are luxuriating on the native grass". In discussing the character of the early settlers he remarked that it was "such as is rarely to be found in our newly acquired territories. With very few exceptions, there is not a more orderly, industrious, active, pains-taking population west of the Alleghenies, than is this of the Iowa District. Those who have been accustomed to associate the name of *Squatter* with the idea of idleness and recklessness, would be quite surprised to see the systematic manner in which everything is here conducted. For intelligence, I boldly assert that they are not surpassed, as a body, by any equal number of citizens of any country in the world."

As to the early inhabitants of Dubuque, Lieutenant Lea and Mr. Murray paint entirely different pictures, though both wrote of conditions as they appeared in the summer of 1835. Indeed, Lea seems to have been much surprised that in a mining region, "there should be so little of the recklessness" usually found in that sort of life. "Here is a mixed mass of English, French, German, Irish, Scotch, and citizens of every part of the United States," he wrote, "each steadily pursuing his own business without interrupting his neighbour."

Lea was of the opinion that this state of affairs might be "attributed to the preponderance of well-informed and well-intentioned gentlemen among them, as well as to the disposition of the mass of

people." In some of the older migrations it was the "reckless in character, the desperate in fortune, or the bold hunter, that sought concealment, wealth or game". But as far as the Iowa country was concerned, it was "the virtuous, the intelligent, and the wealthy" that sought a congenial abode for themselves and posterity.

The law-abiding character of the early pioneers is also illustrated by the organization of a mutual protection association among the residents of Burlington in 1833. They resolved that any person allowing the Indians to have whisky should forfeit all the whisky he had on hand, and likewise the confidence and protection of the association. It was also "*Resolved*; That any person harboring or protecting a refugee who, to evade justice, has fled from the other sections of the Union, shall be delivered with such refugee on the other side of the river." Those were stern days and severe measures were required in a region where regular governmental machinery was lacking.

The regard of the first settlers for religion is evidenced by early writings. In a little guide book on Iowa Territory compiled by Willard Barrows, a deputy United States Surveyor, and published in 1845, the author called attention to the fact that although "the peaceful sabbath bell" is not heard, yet "the sabbath is here, and its benign influence is felt in every hamlet and cottage throughout this new and flourishing country." While the costly "edi-

fices, like those which adorn our Eastern cities" are not to be found, yet "in almost every village is seen the humble temple, consecrated to the worship of Almighty God."

Not only were the early Iowans law-abiding and religious; but they admirably combined those attributes with intelligence and industry. The rapid development of the new region was unusual. One writer was positive "that the annals of history have never been able to record a more rapid progress of settlement than here exhibited; and that, too, with equal intelligence, industry, and enterprise." It was but yesterday that "our settlements were confined to the narrow limits along the borders of the Mississippi river; but to-day we behold the newly reared cabin and cultivated fields for a hundred miles in the interior. But yesterday, the war-whoop and scalping-knife were the terrors of the land; but to-day, there is peace in all our borders, and the industrious farmer feeds his sheep, where the wild deer lay in his covert; and to the nightly howl of the prowling wolf, has succeeded the familiar bark of the faithful house-dog."

The pioneers of Iowa counted many Europeans among their number. Of the 192,214 inhabitants as recorded by the census of 1850, nearly 21,000 were of foreign birth; and of this number over one-half were English-speaking — Irish, English, Welsh, Scotch, and Canadian. In some instances colonies of Germans, French, Hollanders, Hungarians, British, and



Scandinavians settled in little communities by themselves. Early in 1840, for example, a small group of Norwegians settled on Sugar Creek, about twelve miles northwest of Keokuk. There is a statement on record that one of the party "traded an old breech loading musket for a quarter section of land" while another secured an equal area for a yoke of oxen, "and thus the first Norwegian settlement in Iowa was founded."

Such men as these were in truth the makers of Iowa. They found the vast plains a wilderness, and left them a veritable garden; they brought no inheritance other than strong arms and willing hearts. Some of them were extremely religious, others decidedly atheistic; yet they had this in common — perseverance and daring. Possessed of a "faith in themselves and in the country which they had selected" from choice and not from necessity, "they set to work building their log cabins, clearing the timber and tilling the soil, and year by year they saw their small earnings increase". Their acres multiplied and their log cabins were soon given up for larger and more commodious houses.

Mrs. Frances D. Gage visited Iowa in the summer of 1854 and contributed some "Sketches on Iowa" to the New York *Tribune*, giving glowing accounts of the prosperity of the State with its "flourishing new towns, springing up, as it were, by magic, between night and morning." Her impressions of the inhabitants were no less flattering. "The people

are the strong, earnest, energetic, right-thinking and right-feeling people of the land." The founders of the Commonwealth, she thought, "must have been wiser than most men, or they would not in the beginning have recognized all grog-shops as nuisances, and have made the vendor of ardent spirits liable for his own transgressions. They must have been more just than common men, or they would not at first have secured the property rights of the wife, and made her the joint guardian, with her husband, of her children. They must have been men more humane than common, or they would not have secured the homestead to the family. These good laws have led those of other States who wish to be wise, just, and humane, to become the dwellers of this fair land. Hence I hesitate not to say that it is the most moral and progressive, as well as the best-improved State, of its age, in all our country."

The people of the East, she warned, must cease to think of Iowa as "way out West". Indeed, "the people who last year, or last week, or even day before yesterday, left New England, New York, Pennsylvania, or Ohio," she wrote, "with the last *Harper* or *Putnam* in their pocket, the last *Tribune* in their hand, the last fashion on their heads and shoulders, and the last reform in their hearts, are very much the same people in Iowa that their neighbors found them at home, only that a new country, log cabins, and little deprivations call out all their latent powers, cultivate the fallow ground of heart and feelings,



make them more free, more earnest, more charitable; in fact, expand, enlarge, and fit them all the better for life and its duties.”

Mrs. Gage attended a political meeting at Oskaloosa in 1854 to hear a Free-soil nominee for Governor speak. There the “men looked just like men elsewhere, only they were a little more civil and genteel, and did not make quite so general a spittoon of the Court House; and I did not see one that leaned toward drunkenness, though the house was full. I went to church; fine astrals, polished walnut, and crimson velvet made the pulpit look like home; ladies rustled rich brocades, or flitted in lawns as natural as life. The only point of difference that struck me was, that their bonnets, with a few exceptions did not hang so exactly upon nothing as in the East; probably because there was less of nothing to hang on.”

In a word it may be observed that two “breeds of migrant men have made the West,—the seven-league-booters and the little-by-littlers. Early Iowa invited the latter class, not the former. Few pioneer plainsmen came far, or came with the spirit of rovers. Trekking from Indiana or Illinois, bent upon finding cheap lands, anxious to escape competition, they sought the same chances for frontier fortune building which had once enriched their elders. Iowa was therefore a huge overflow meeting, thronged with the second generation of middle-Westerners. Quite naturally, then, the state lacked



the era of gorgeous desperado jollity which fell to the farthest West." Iowa's beginnings were rather commonplace: sensible folks merely came here and lived. "And once settled upon their spacious, wind-blown prairies, these migrant peoples so mingled that the resultant Iowa was not a mosaic, but an emulsion. Moreover, the uniformity of the prairie itself contributed to the uniformity of the Iowans by destining nearly all to be farmers."

From one point of view the character of the individual is the important consideration, but when examined from another angle "it is the merit of the mass, not the merit of the individual, the humbler, and for matter of that the mere brown-colored virtues, not the blazing, sporadic flashes of genius or prowess, that establish the real greatness of a people. Unrelieved industry, morality, intelligence, and loyalty make very melancholy material for literary or artistic treatment; but when your soul is bent upon finding a happy augury for your country's future, what better can you seek? Happily this state of Iowa, so typical of the broad, fertile, populous valley of the upper Mississippi, stands representative of the bulk of our people."

GEO. F. ROBESON

## A Pioneer Journey

In the spring of 1841 I had my means all locked up in produce — corn, flour, pork, and bacon — and I found that it would be necessary for me to realize early on a good portion of my stock in order to replenish my store. The spring was late that year, and it was well along in April before I could get a boat to carry me up the river. At last I found the steamer *Smelter*. Scribe Harris, the captain, said he was going up as far as Prairie du Chien, and I concluded to go with him. On our way up we went into Snake Hollow where I made a profitable sale. At Prairie du Chien I found that the fur company had received no spring supplies and was in need of provisions. During the forenoon I sold them my entire stock, all at fair prices, and received my pay, cash down, in gold and silver. A large part of the company funds in those days consisted of Spanish silver dollars.

Captain Harris, finding the Wisconsin River very high, decided to take the opportunity of bringing down a cargo of shot from a shot tower up that river. Inasmuch as he might be gone a week, I was

[This account of the experiences of J. M. D. Burrows on a trip from Prairie du Chien to Davenport in 1841 is adapted for THE PALIMPSEST from his book, *Fifty Years in Iowa*. Mr. Burrows came to Iowa from Ohio in 1838, and until just before the Civil War was the most prominent merchant, miller, and meat packer in Davenport.  
— THE EDITOR]

in a quandary as to a means of getting back to Davenport. Gold and silver was at a ten per cent premium, our paper currency being nothing but "wildcat" issued at Green Bay, and I was very anxious to be home with my money. There was no boat above and none expected from below, but upon inquiry I learned that at some Grove, about twelve miles from Prairie du Chien, a stage would pass through at three o'clock the next day. I made up my mind that I would take that stage.

The next morning after breakfast I went back to the fur company's office and got my silver exchanged for gold as far as possible. Having procured some strong brown paper, I went to my room, wrapped each piece of money separately, and did them up into small rolls. Each pocket was loaded with all it would hold and the rest I tied up in a strong handkerchief.

At eleven o'clock that forenoon I took a lunch and started down the river. Three miles below I struck the Wisconsin River which was booming high and seemed to run with the velocity of a locomotive. For half an hour, off and on, I rang the ferry bell, but no ferryman appeared. At last I saw that I would either have to go back or paddle myself over, so I launched the ferry canoe and shoved off.

I had never been in a canoe before and did not know how to handle it, but soon found that I had to sit very still, flat on the leaky bottom. The canoe kept going round and round, and every few minutes



would dip some water. Meanwhile the current was conveying me swiftly down to the Mississippi.

I thought I was lost. I would have given all my money to be safe on either shore, and why I was not drowned was always a mystery to me — but I suppose my time had not come.

I noticed that as the canoe whirled around each turn brought me nearer to the shore. I also began to manage the paddle to better advantage, and finally touched some willows, which I caught, and pulled the canoe as near the shore as I could. Then I jumped overboard and got on dry land as soon as possible. After I had straightened up and let the water drain from my clothing I set forward again.

About a mile farther on I came to a small creek. The water was fully four or five feet deep. There was no bridge and the stream could not be forded on account of the perpendicular banks. After some examination I saw there was no way but to jump it, so, choosing the narrowest place I could find, I pitched my bundle of money across, took a run, and jumped! Just made it, and that was all.

As I struck the edge of the bank one of my coat pockets gave way and fell, with its heavy contents, into four feet of water. I hunted up a forked stick and, luckily, the lining having gone with the pocket, soon fished it out. Making for the stagehouse as fast as I could go I arrived without further trouble, only to find that the stage had gone!

I then determined to make my way to Dubuque

on foot, hoping to find a boat there bound down stream. About dark I came to a cabin where I decided to stay all night. I was puzzled to know what to do with my money, as I might be robbed — perhaps murdered. My first thought was to hide it in a pile of brush near by, but I was afraid some one would see me, so I resolved to share its fate.

On applying to the woman at the cabin for lodging she referred me to her husband who was at the barn, so I interviewed him. He said I could stay. He was a rough-looking man, and I did not feel very safe.

After he had taken care of the stock we went to the house together. Supper was nearly ready. I took a seat by the fire with my bundle by my side. In a few minutes supper was announced and I went to the table, carrying my bundle with me.

Just then two of the hardest-looking men I ever saw came in and sat down at the table, eyeing me sharply. Just as I was becoming a little alarmed the proprietor bowed his head and asked a blessing on the meal. No human being can realize what a feeling of relief came over me. All anxiety about my money and my life passed away.

Early the next morning at the break of day I was on the road again, determined to reach Dubuque some time that night. At noon it began to rain, but I persevered. At sundown I reached Parsons' Ferry, fifteen miles above Dubuque. Being on the Wisconsin side it was necessary to cross there, and again I was troubled to arouse the ferryman. After



nearly an hour, however, he answered my signal and set me over. By this time it was pitch dark and raining hard, and I had fifteen miles yet to go. I took the middle of the road. The mud was very deep, and the darkness so intense that an object could not be seen six inches away.

While plodding along with my bundle in one hand and a big club, which I used as a cane, in the other, I ran against a man. Neither of us had seen the other. I was not a coward, but never in my life was I more startled than at that moment. My heart choked me so that I could not articulate plainly but, with my club raised, I stammered out, "What do you want?" I realized from his mumbling and incoherent reply that he was drunk, so I walked around him and pushed on my way.

At eleven o'clock that night I reached Dubuque, having walked seventy-five miles in thirty-six hours. I was not acquainted in Dubuque and did not know where to find a hotel. After wandering about some time I met a man whom I asked to direct me to the best tavern in the place. He did so but as I did not know the names of the streets or their location I could not find the house. Tired and bewildered, I accosted another man.

"My friend," I said, "I wish to find the best hotel in town. I am a stranger and have been hunting your town over for some time, up one street and down another, until I have become confused. Will you be kind enough to come along and show me?"



He cheerfully did so. It was a first-rate house — the best I had seen above St. Louis. I had a nice, clean room, all to myself, and the table was well provided. I told the landlord he need not bother to cook anything for me; that although I had had nothing to eat since daylight, I would be satisfied with a cold lunch and a cup of hot coffee. On going to bed I gave orders not to be called in the morning unless there was a boat going down.

I did not awaken until noon the next day, when my landlord knocked at the door and said there was a boat at the landing, going down. I was so sore and stiff I could scarcely dress myself, and had to slide down the banister to get down stairs. The boat was not scheduled to leave until three o'clock, so I took dinner with my kind landlord. We got under way toward night, and reached home the next forenoon. I was so lame for ten days that it was as much as I could do to attend to my business.

Such were the trials and labors of a pioneer merchant of those early days.

J. M. D. BURROWS

## Bridging the Cedar

Walk up South Street from Battery Park in New York City late some summer evening and look straight ahead. Brooklyn Bridge, a gigantic cobweb dotted with points of light, is before you. Along the arched steel span of the cobweb drift the white lights of passing cars while the red and green lights of river craft float mistily beneath. There it stands — in its day the wonder of the world, and still, after forty years of service, a monument to the constructive genius of man.

Thirty-two years before the famous Brooklyn Bridge was opened for traffic, a suspension bridge very similar in appearance to the marvelous structure spanning the East River was constructed over the Cedar River in Iowa. But the history of the Cedar River Suspension Bridge is a far different story.

The year 1850 found Muscatine a growing river town of 2540 inhabitants, awake to its advantages as a distributing center for the inland trade. Long newspaper articles proclaimed the necessity of building graded plank roads over which much of the produce of central Iowa would find its way to market. Projects such as these, it was thought, could not fail to pay big dividends — perhaps twenty cents on each dollar subscribed. To the enthusiastic

boosters for Muscatine, the broad Cedar River about ten miles to the west afforded no serious obstacle to their plans for trade expansion. It should be bridged.

Accordingly, during the summer of 1850, arrangements were made with N. L. Milburn, an inventor and contractor from Paducah, Kentucky, to erect his patented suspension bridge over the Cedar. This structure was supposed to be much more durable than the Remington arch bridge. Both Mr. Milburn and his bridge were recommended to other communities by Muscatine enthusiasts.

To finance the project, the Muscatine, Washington, and Oskaloosa Road and Bridge Company was organized. The name elicited from a local editor the remark, "what a long tail our cat's got". Stock was sold without difficulty through personal solicitation to business men, townspeople, and farmers. The stockholders elected a board of directors and Joseph Bennett, one of the principal shareholders and an energetic supporter of the project, became president of the company. So completely did Mr. Milburn gain the confidence of the directors in his integrity and in the merits of his plan that he was not required to furnish bond but was urged to proceed with the construction of the bridge with all possible dispatch.

Material for the structure was brought up the Mississippi River on the small steamer *General Bem*, thence up the Iowa River to its juncture with the Cedar, and then up the latter stream to the spot



designated for the erection of the bridge — a place nine or ten miles west of Muscatine. At this point the timbers and lumber were unloaded and, early in the autumn of 1850, Milburn and his crew began work. The eager stockholders and merchants looked forward to the early completion of the structure.

There were some citizens in Muscatine, however, who had doubts about the success of the project and did not share the optimism of the directors. In fact, certain critics were outspoken in their opposition to the type of bridge being built. Common sense principles of construction should be used, they argued, instead of the new-fangled idea of a suspension bridge. Others objected to the site of the new structure. It was a big mistake, in their judgment, to put the bridge any place above the junction of the Iowa and Cedar rivers. But the stockholders and directors of the company were indifferent to these criticisms, and the work of construction continued.

The *Iowa Democratic Enquirer* for October 19, 1850, published an item of news which was welcome to both the tradesmen of Muscatine and to the farmers living west of the town. "FARMERS, AHOY! BRIDGE!" The item read, "We are pleased to announce that a strong safe temporary bridge has been thrown across the Cedar by Mr. Milburn at the point of the Suspension Bridge and until the latter is completed, over which the farmers of that region are already bringing their produce. Come on. Market is brisk and prices high. Try us."

Another item in the same issue announced that the "temporary bridge over Cedar at the site of the Suspension Bridge is strong and safe, and being on a level with the shore is very easy crossing. We were on the ground Thursday last and were struck with the energy with which Mr. Milburn pushes forward the work. Mr. M. is determined to make a good bridge a 'model bridge', even if he loses by the contract."

Throughout the autumn, work on the bridge continued and a visitor to the scene of construction in December, 1850, reported, "The work is in a forward condition and going ahead with all dispatch compatible with its perfect combination of strength and durability. It now presents a most imposing view, and one of great interest. All were pleased with the appearance of the work. . . . Mr. Milburn by his polite explanations, convinced us of the merit of his plan."

Expenses of construction mounted, however, and soon exceeded the original estimate so that in January, 1851, perturbed stockholders of the Muscatine, Washington and Oskaloosa Road and Bridge Company held a meeting to determine what should be done. It was disclosed at this meeting that \$10,000 had already been spent, that a debt of \$4500 in addition had been incurred, and that \$2500 more had to be raised to prevent the company from losing all that had been invested. A spirited discussion ensued. Finally, resolutions were passed to issue



preferred stock certificates in sums not less than five dollars, these shares to bear interest at ten per cent payable semi-annually. Principal and interest of this loan were to be paid out of the first tolls collected and the bridge itself was to be pledged as security for the loan. The stockholders of the company were to be given ten days to advance this additional \$2500, which amounted to twenty per cent of the total stock already subscribed. After ten days any unsold stock was to be offered to the public. The editor of the *Enquirer* hoped that the stockholders themselves would raise the necessary sum. "Walk up gentlemen", he urged. Although the majority of the stockholders had subscribed all that they felt able to give, the danger of losing the amount already invested and the hope of rich returns from tolls led them to furnish the required \$2500. The crisis was met and construction continued.

Late in January, 1851, the stability of the new bridge was subjected to a severe test. Shortly after the trestle work was joined in the center, but before it was made secure by hogchains and bolts, a high wind blowing upstream carried away the scaffolding below and left the center span without support. Although the unsupported section deflected twelve to twenty inches upstream before the wind, not an inch did it give downward. The rest of the work stood firm and unmoved. Although the windstorm caused about forty dollars damage the company felt that



the successful test of the stability of the bridge was worth twice that amount. Thereafter the bridge stood unsupported, without staging or props.

Other towns began to notice the new structure and newspapers made favorable comments. The Burlington *Hawk-Eye* remarked, "The Muscatine folks have flung an arch of 600 feet span across Cedar River. The trestle work is said to be beautiful, and the bridge is to be one of the handsomest and the most substantial in the Union. Travellers from about pronounce the new bridge the most magnificent structure of the kind they ever beheld."

Indeed, the bridge was, in appearance, all that its admirers claimed. On each bank stood two high square towers reaching ninety feet above the surface of the river. These towers were five feet square, each side being the width of four logs which had been squared and bolted one to another with big iron bolts. The logs, perhaps twenty feet long and over a foot square, were of tough, hewn oak and were placed end to end, jointed at the middle of the adjoining log. The bases of these towering piers were sunk in the ground on the banks almost as deep as the bed of the river but no stone was used in the foundation to make them more secure. Between each pair of towers extended heavy, six by six inch cross braces high enough above the road so as not to interfere with travel. Heavy wire cables supported the driveway of the bridge, which was twenty-one feet wide at the piers and narrowed to twelve feet

in the middle. The driveway spanned the river in a graceful arch, high enough in the center to allow the small steamboats to pass under. The wire cables came together in bundles at the top of the square towers then extended downward toward each bank and were fastened to logs buried several feet in the ground as anchors. Long approaches on trestle work sloped up to the twin towers on either side, joining the driveway at a point fifteen feet above the bank of the river. On each side of the long approaches was a plain wooden railing while an ornamental railing of wooden cross-pieces extended along the sides of the high arched driveway. Including the approaches, the total length of the structure was said to be twenty-one hundred feet and the span between the piers was six hundred and fifty-seven feet. All who saw the bridge praised the beauty of its design and marvelled at its strength.

By April 3, 1851, the work was so nearly finished that the president of the company, Joseph Bennett, rode across on horseback, the first man to cross in that fashion, but he had to turn back without landing on the west bank of the river because of the uncompleted condition of the approach.

During the night of April fourth, twenty-four hours after Bennett's triumphal ride on the bridge, a terrific storm of rain and wind swept down the Cedar Valley. Lightning revealed the swaying, swishing branches of trees. Suddenly, there came a heavy rumble, a ripping, wrenching crash, and the Cedar



River Suspension Bridge, the pride of Muscatine and the envy of other river towns, fell with a tremendous splash into the swirling waters below. The long arched span first parted in the center, then each half swinging around before the wind pulled the towers from their fastenings in the earth. The hogchains held firm and the whole structure tumbled into the river.

Great was the consternation among the stockholders when the news reached them. What was to be done? Milburn, it seems, confident that his task on the Cedar was drawing to successful completion, had gone to Keosauqua to begin work on another bridge. The *Iowa Democratic Enquirer* aired its views on the subject in the following item: "Our citizens were startled from their propriety on Saturday last by the news of the fall of the Suspension Bridge over Cedar River. It was like a shower on a stand up shirt collar to their hopes and calculations. The thermometer of public spirit stood at a low figure, and many feared that no degree of enthusiasm for any future project, could raise the mercury of individual liberality to the giving point. But subsequently upon a calm view of the calamity, it has lost more than half its horrors — though it is still regarded as a great triumph by that class of mushroom prophets, — 'birds of ill omen' — who, after every disaster, cock up their eyes, and with a toss of the head side-wise exclaim, 'ah, ha, I told you so!' The sensible view of the subject is that it's down, and can't be



helped — it must Go UP AGAIN, stronger and better, and that is a fact. The individual who supposes or teaches that Muscatine cannot recover from the loss of \$15,000 in a bridge, or that such a loss will discourage the public spirit of an intelligent community, should be tapped for the ‘simples’ — and the man who has any interest in the city, and will now lay his hand on his pocket, and declare that ‘they’ve got the last cent they’ll get from me!’ should go straight to Bevard and order a pork barrel, that he may be headed up in it — he can receive all the food, air and light he needs through the bung hole.”

Following this outburst against the calamity howlers the editor proceeded to describe the appearance of the wreck. The timbers of the towers were shivered somewhat and the ornamental trestle work of the arched span was smashed in some places, but for the most part the structure was but little broken. Although nearly two-thirds of the plank flooring had floated down the river most of it was caught and landed at various points below. The inclined approaches at each end were uninjured. The disaster proved, thought the writer, that the bridge was strong enough to resist any amount of perpendicular weight but that it needed some lateral support to hold it against high winds.

The editor argued that it would do no good to grumble about the errors of the builder or to complain about the carelessness of the directors in not requiring him to give bond. “The bridge must be re-

erected and made to stand," he insisted. "We have the material for which our money has been paid,—the timbers are ready to be again put together. What has been done has cost \$15,000. From three to five thousand more will make it right and secure against the loss of the whole amount invested and last, though not least, the bridge is necessary for the prosperity of Muscatine and when completed as it should be will pay a handsome dividend to the stockholders. Those who think the means cannot be had should learn that it will not do to estimate other men's good sense and liberality by their own. The sum necessary can and will be forthcoming—a gentleman who lives beyond the bridge and has now no stock, declared on the ground Sunday, that he was ready to subscribe to put it up again. We heard one citizen in town who has no stock, say yesterday that he was ready to subscribe, and one other who has five shares, that he was ready to take four more. The money can and must be raised—if not one way it must be another—the bridge must and will go up—go up on common sense principles and under bonds from the contractor. The City of Muscatine is able to build a dozen such bridges, and this misfortune will only call forth her energies. We hope the directors will take the necessary steps to raise the means to put the bridge up as it ought to be. It won't do to stand still now."

Spirited discussion marked the meeting of the directors of the bridge company following the dis-



aster. The sentiment expressed by the editor prevailed, however. The board resolved that the bridge should be repaired and, as soon as they could hear from Milburn as to what he would and could do in the matter, they proposed to push the work forward rapidly.

Long articles from stockholders in the bridge company and others interested in the project appeared in the *Iowa Democratic Enquirer*. "The bridge on the upper route is down," wrote one enraged shareholder. "We should bridge the Iowa below the mouth of the Cedar. About \$20,000 will build a good bridge. None of your Milburn bridges."

Another contributor, signing his name "Muscatine", was moved to remark, "The bridge has fallen; and with it has fallen the countenances of all who were interested in its successful completion. This is a great calamity which falls heaviest upon the directors of the bridge company. Many are heaping odium upon them for not having Mr. Milburn under bonds, so that in the event of the bridge proving a failure, as it has, the stockholders would suffer no loss. But this is no time to curse the fruits of the indiscreet or fall into sulky melancholy and refuse to go forward with the improvements necessary for the good of our town. This misfortune should only incite us to greater caution and renewed energy and determination in going forward with this work. Now is the time to form a new bridge company and build a bridge on good common sense principles



below the forks of the Cedar and Iowa where the bridge should have been built in the first place."

One of the stockholders felt that any rational being might have known that such a heavy structure could not stand without better support. He recommended that if the present company did not choose to rebuild the bridge, they should hand it over to the mayor and city council of Muscatine who with the assistance of the marshal might make it stand by the force of a city ordinance. Then in a more serious vein he admitted that all the money of Muscatine had not gone down the Cedar River and that he for one was willing to re-subscribe for as much stock as he had originally.

What did Milburn propose to do? News of his opinions and plans was eagerly sought. Late in April, word came from him that he would return to Muscatine in a short time to restore the bridge. He expressed his conviction that it could be reërected and rendered durable and secure. This information raised the hopes of the directors who forthwith dispatched a special messenger to confer with him at Keosauqua.

A few days later, however, came the disturbing news that Milburn would not return to reërect the bridge. He was reported to have said that his contract at Keosauqua prevented his leaving there and, moreover, that he had lost confidence in the suspension type of bridge for the Cedar River, on account of the length of the span and its location.

This report was a sad blow to every shareholder. What should be done? Some proposed that a bridge should be built from trestle work to trestle work, supported by strong abutments with a pier in the river and a draw section over the channel. Others favored the suspension type of bridge and wished to proceed with the replacement of the fallen span. Still others wanted to sell or assign the stock to a company which would guarantee to erect the bridge. They believed that the lure of fifteen or twenty per cent in tolls would attract a reputable company if the stockholders would agree to sell. No agreement could be reached.

Later in the month of May the report reached Muscatine that Milburn had changed his mind and that, if the directors would support him, he would raise the bridge and make it a permanent structure. Again hopes mounted, and confidence was nearly restored when Milburn further asserted that the bridge could again be placed upon its abutments at small expense and could be made secure against storms by means of suitable lateral fastenings.

Milburn did return to Muscatine toward the middle of June, 1851, considerably nettled by newspaper criticism of his conduct as a contractor. He threatened to hold the editor of the *Iowa Democratic Enquirer* personally responsible, but the editor advised him not to let his angry passions rise and refused to retract any of his statements. After a few days Milburn left Muscatine, promising to return soon

and make definite arrangements for the reërection of the bridge.

Apparently he never returned. The wreck was finally sold late in the autumn of 1851 to Joseph Bennett who planned to rebuild the structure during the coming spring. In the meantime, however, railroads became the all-absorbing topic and attention was focused on the project of securing a line through Muscatine to Oskaloosa. The Cedar River Suspension Bridge was forgotten, but for many years its rotting timbers and rusting cables remained — mute monuments to the soaring ambitions of Muscatine merchants and the wrecked hopes of the farmers to the west.

BRUCE E. MAHAN



## Comment by the Editor

### THE DEMOCRACY OF PIONEERING

Whatever the social and political opinions of the American colonists may have been, their descendants have for a century or more been pledged to the idea of democracy. Nor has the concept of democracy been confined to popular government. The meaning of the term has been expanded from the strict construction of the Greek root words to include social and economic conditions. Democracy has become a shibboleth of the American people. The reason for this lies not so much in the general acceptance of a well-reasoned theory as in the force of circumstances.

Where social inequality exists, government by the people is either nominal or impossible; but where every man lives on the same plane as his neighbor, where all are engaged in a common enterprise, and where there is no distinction of race or class or creed, there democracy is inevitable. Probably never in the history of the world were conditions better adapted to obliterate social, economic, and political differences than in the settlement of the Mississippi Valley. When the hardy American frontiersmen crossed the Alleghenies and centered their attention solely upon the conquest of the conti-

·     nent they created conditions which preordained the establishment of democratic institutions. While other factors contributed to the democratization of American politics in the era of Andrew Jackson and Henry Dodge, the life of the pioneers was the most potent influence of all.

    The men and women who filtered into the Ohio Valley and spread westward to the Missouri, who established settlements, subdued the wilderness, and compelled obedience to the laws of God and man faced more perils than Ulysses in all his wanderings. They came of their own free will, impelled by no political or religious incentive and leaving no grievance behind; they sought new homes and a chance to shape their own destiny; and, inspired with the zeal of creating, they founded a dozen Commonwealths. Hard work, privation, danger, a common occupation, and absolute equality of opportunity were the character-building conditions in the life of the pioneers — conditions admirably suited to inspire faith in democracy. Indeed, democracy is the very essence of such a life.

    Pioneering is not only inherently democratic but it develops the very qualities of citizenship which make democracy successful. Honesty, justice, and intelligence are at once the prime virtues of good government and the stock in trade of the pioneers. For shrewd common sense, keen judgment, and broad understanding the early settlers in the Great Valley have seldom if ever been excelled, while the

claim associations and extralegal courts are eloquent testimonials of their innate sense of justice. The absence of locks and the hearty hospitality for neighbor and stranger alike bespeak their own regard for common honesty. Self-reliance, courage, and resourcefulness — all important elements in the art of governing — are also equally descriptive of prominent traits in the character of the winners of the West.

Being accustomed to social equality and community coöperation, fixed in the habit of self-determination, and richly endowed with the principal qualifications for good government, the pioneers naturally claimed for themselves extensive participation in politics. They revolutionized political practice. What wonder that democracy is an American watchword. It is the experience of the race.

J. E. B.





# The **P**ALIMPSEST

OCTOBER 1923

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## THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE

The PALIMPSEST, issued monthly by the State Historical Society of Iowa, is devoted to the dissemination of Iowa History. Supplementing the other publications of this Society, it aims to present the materials of Iowa History in a form that is attractive and a style that is popular in the best sense—to the end that the story of our Commonwealth may be more widely read and cherished.

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH

*Superintendent*

## THE MEANING OF PALIMPSESTS

In early times palimpsests were parchments or other materials from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete; and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the records of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

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EDITED BY JOHN ELY BRIGGS

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## Kelly's Army

The Populist movement of the early nineties was an attempt of the discontented to better their condition. Farmers enrolled themselves among the down-trodden because the prices of crops were low and mortgages were too common, and industrial laborers felt oppressed because wages were small and jobs were scarce. They all wanted more money and better times. Various prophets of this discontent arose and preached their panaceas among the people. Perhaps the strangest of the many peculiar movements connected with the Populist uprising was the plan formulated and translated into action by Jacob S. Coxey of Massillon, Ohio, to relieve the suffering from unemployment.

On the chilly Easter Sunday of March 24, 1894, Coxey's army of the unemployed began its march on Washington, with the intent to present itself as a living petition to Congress for half a billion dollars

of paper money, to be expended in building good roads throughout the country, thus giving work to the workless at the rate of a dollar and a half for an eight hour day. The novelty of the scheme; "General" Coxey's business reputation; and the exploits of some of the freaks who accompanied the expedition attracted nation-wide attention. The organization was christened "The Commonweal of Christ", a title derived from the "theosophy" of the picturesque and versatile Carl Browne, a labor agitator, cartoonist, and religious crank who had converted Coxey to his faith and who was the marshal of the army.

The Commonweal arrived in Washington on the first of May, 1894. Coxey had boasted that a hundred thousand unemployed would be there to stage a great demonstration on the Capitol steps, but he arrived with a scant five hundred. After a disturbance on the Capitol grounds in which Browne and a number of spectators were clubbed by the police, Coxey, Browne, and Christopher Columbus Jones, the leader of a contingent from Philadelphia, were arrested, fined, and imprisoned for walking on the grass and for carrying banners on the Capitol grounds contrary to the law.

This fiasco did not put an immediate end to the army of the unemployed as had been expected. Coxey's army camped on the outskirts of Washington, awaiting reinforcements. It was evident before the Commonweal had reached Washington that



its march had started a movement. The newspapers had seized upon the story and had treated the public to a great deal of amusement at the expense of Coxey and his outfit, and incidentally they had given the Commonwealth an enormous amount of free advertising.

While Coxey was advancing upon Washington, various "industrial armies" were organizing in many cities to go to the Capitol and petition Congress. As they proceeded eastward they were fed because people sympathized with them or because it was the easiest way to get rid of them; they stole or borrowed trains when the railroads refused to carry them; and they were thus able to cover long distances before they were arrested or compelled to seek other methods of travel. Strict discipline was imposed by their elected leaders and while they were, on the whole, remarkably well-behaved and orderly, they caused much apprehension, and police, marshals, militia, and even the regular army were kept busy protecting railroad property and reassuring nervous citizens.

The largest, and in many respects the most interesting of these industrial armies, was the one piloted across the continent from San Francisco to Washington by General Charles T. Kelly. It attained its greatest numbers and the height of its popularity in western Iowa.

Early in April, 1894, the mayor of San Francisco paid the ferry passage of six hundred unemployed



men across the bay to Oakland. There Kelly took command and the men were fed, quartered in a large building known as the Tabernacle, and finally crowded into a freight train and shipped east. At Sacramento, where the army increased to a thousand men, a special train was provided to carry them over the Southern Pacific to Ogden, Utah. But Ogden did not want them and, after several days of excitement, the army marched out of the city escorted by cavalry. A Union Pacific train was captured (apparently with the connivance of Union Pacific officials who hoped in this manner to avoid responsibility for leaving the men at the other end of the line), and thus the army proceeded to Omaha.

While Kelly's freight cars were rolling toward the Missouri River the people of Omaha and Council Bluffs, fearing the approach of what they believed to be an army of tramps and desperate characters, became more and more alarmed. But when the train pulled into Omaha on Sunday morning, April 15th, the appearance and perfect discipline of the army helped to allay popular apprehension. The people of Omaha were further relieved when Kelly and his followers crossed the river to Council Bluffs.

If the Union Pacific was eager to pass the army on, the railroads that extended eastward from Council Bluffs were equally anxious to avoid receiving it. On Saturday, Judge N. M. Hubbard, attorney for the Chicago and Northwestern, had called upon Governor Frank D. Jackson at Des Moines to

ask protection for the railroads at Council Bluffs. The Governor also received a telegram from the sheriff of Pottawattamie County, which announced that Kelly's army was expected and that the railroads were demanding protection.

The Governor at once set out for Council Bluffs on a special train. Shortly after his arrival that evening he canvassed the situation with the Attorney General, the agents of the railroads, the mayor of Council Bluffs, and the sheriff of the county. The seven companies of militia, which had already been instructed to hold themselves in readiness, were called out, but at midnight the Governor announced that no effort should be made "to prevent landing of the pilgrims on Iowa soil", and that the troops would be used only to preserve order.

Kelly's army arrived in Council Bluffs before noon on Sunday. The men stayed near their train and built fires of old ties which had been distributed along the track for that purpose. Many, worn with fatigue from the journey, slept on the damp ground. Three hundred militiamen were encamped a few hundred yards away, but the industrial army was under no restraint except that imposed by the moral effect of the presence of these troops and by their own discipline. "While here", said a dispatch to the *Iowa State Register*, "they roamed at will over the city, and not an act was committed that was not praiseworthy."

It was estimated that thirty thousand people came



to see the army during its first day in the city. The impression that it had a serious purpose was strengthened by its manifestations of religious zeal on that Sunday afternoon. "After dinner", wrote a newspaper reporter, "the army gathered into little knots and religious services were conducted in half a dozen places at once. Prayers were offered up by the men so earnest and full of touching pathos that tears were brought to the eyes of hundreds of people. The religious element seems strongly to predominate, and when some good old Methodist hymn was started it was carried through by hundreds of voices that appeared to be well trained for congregational singing." Kelly boasted that there was not a tramp or a drunkard in the army, and that three-fourths of his men were mechanics. The report that on the first day in Council Bluffs only one hundred and fifty-five recruits were accepted out of several hundred who applied, indicates that some discrimination was used in admitting members into the organization.

On Monday afternoon the army, in a column nearly half a mile long and headed by several wagon loads of donated provisions, marched to the chautauqua grounds three or four miles east of the city. The militia followed. The next day there was a cold rain, with flurries of snow: the industrials stood wet and shivering in the mud where they had spent the night. On top of Chautauqua Hill was an amphitheater, a large unused building which might have



afforded ample shelter, but part of the militia had encamped in it, and the officer in charge, nervously apprehending a disturbance if the industrials got too close to his men, refused to admit the unfortunate Kellyites. The owner of the building, however, took pity upon the men who, after a night in the mud and a day in the rain, were suffering acutely. He went to a lawyer's office and had a permit drawn up which allowed them to use the building for forty-eight hours if they built no fires there. When the sheriff received the permit at the chautauqua grounds he discovered that it had been dated the 15th instead of the 17th, and the time had expired before it began! He was unable to persuade the officer in charge of the building to admit the suffering men, and the militiamen "boasted that they would shoot if the Kellyites attempted to come in out of the storm."

This inhumane treatment of the men, for whom much sympathy had already been aroused, caused great indignation. A committee of citizens demanded that the Governor withdraw the troops. The Governor blamed the sheriff, saying that the militia was under the sheriff's orders when it was sent to the chautauqua grounds. He soon took the companies out of the sheriff's hands and relieved them from duty. Much of the popular resentment was directed against the railroads, which were held responsible for the militia being called out, while Judge Hubbard was the object of general

execration on account of his alleged declaration that if the industrials captured a train a wild engine should be sent down the track to wreck it and thus settle the whole problem.

On Wednesday night in Omaha at a great mass meeting in the public square Kelly told the story of his army and explained that the aim of his men "was to impress the government at Washington as mere petitions would not, and that the government might understand and appreciate the condition of the multitude of laborers and devise some measures of relief." He did not suggest any definite program of legislation — perhaps he had none worked out as yet — but he expressed a sort of mystical faith in the willingness and ability of Congress to do what was necessary when his army called attention to the need for it. "When we reach Washington", he said, "and present our living petition to Congress — a petition that cannot be pigeonholed, referred, or put in the waste-basket — something must happen. You ask me, What will we do? My answer is: What will the other fellows do? Do you not think that in California tonight there are thousands of women and children kneeling by their bedsides, praying to God for the success of the Industrial Army? So long as these prayers are ascending we will not turn back, nor will we abandon our purpose."

Meanwhile efforts were being made by Governor Jackson and the mayors of the two cities to induce



the railroads to carry the army to the Mississippi, or to Chicago, and they offered to pay the cost of running the trains. But the railroads did not want to set a precedent that would encourage other bodies of unemployed to move eastward. They also feared the displeasure of the people of Illinois, and they asserted that they had no right to carry men without means of support into that State.

Matters began to come to a head on Thursday, the 19th. At a workingmen's meeting in Omaha that night it was decided to march to Council Bluffs and apply to the railway managers for a freight train. On Friday morning a large body of laboring men with drums, fifes, and flags marched across the river and joined the crowd already gathered before the Grand Hotel. Ten thousand people were there — about half from Omaha and half from Council Bluffs. The situation began to look ominous. The railroads pulled their engines and cars out of town, and all train service was cut off. The Governor, the mayor, leaders of the army, and a committee of citizens conferred. The railroads unanimously declined to accept anything less than regular fares, amounting to about \$15,000, which was too expensive. Part of the mob captured an engine and some cars, but the engine was cut loose by its crew and run into a roundhouse. The Rock Island agent dispatched a section boss to tear up the track to prevent the passage of a train, but Kellyites persuaded the section hands to quit work and replaced the rail that had



been removed. The Milwaukee tracks were torn up at Neola.

In the meantime the army started to walk to Weston, a few miles away. A captured engine and some freight cars were run out to the camp at Weston, but Kelly was too conscientious or too wary to accept the train. He refused, he said, to break the law and put his army in the wrong by accepting a stolen train, and besides, he feared some trick. He declined an invitation to ride back and accept the hospitality of Council Bluffs, but he used the train to send back his sick, of whom there were a considerable number after the exposure on the chautauqua grounds. On Saturday, some Omaha trade unionists again invaded Council Bluffs, looking for a train, but they found nothing except a few Union Pacific switch engines and flat cars. By Sunday the excitement had subsided.

While these events were transpiring the army was growing: at Weston the enrollment reached nineteen hundred, and fully fifteen hundred men were in line when the column started eastward across Iowa. The march became a continuous ovation. Farmers came as far as twenty-five miles to see the army and to bring provisions. The Woodmen of the World, who had lodges in most of the towns along the route, furnished teams and wagons to carry the provisions and the sick. Advance agents, representing the Knights of Labor, the Central Labor Union of Council Bluffs, and the Nebraska Federation of

Labor, preceded the army and made arrangements for its entertainment.

On the road between Council Bluffs and Weston a youth from the Pacific Coast by the name of Jack London fell into the rear rank of the column. He had quit shoveling coal for \$30 a month to join the industrial army, but he had missed it at Sacramento and had pursued it on blind baggages, on the trucks of freight cars, and otherwise, until he finally caught up. He was not yet known as a writer, but he kept a diary of his journey with Kelly from Weston to Hannibal, Missouri. "It was circus day when we came to town", he wrote, "and every day was circus day, for there were many towns. Sure; they enjoyed it as much as we. We played their local nines with our picked baseball team; and we gave them better vaudeville than they'd often had, for there was good talent left in some of the decayed artists of the army!" Before he reached Des Moines his shoes were so worn that he found himself walking on "eight blisters and more coming", so he dropped out of the ranks to pick up a ride with a farmer.

In view of Kelly's lack of any military training his discipline, as it was described by those who saw it, was remarkable. The army consisted of thirteen companies, each with a captain, a lieutenant, and two sergeants. His men could form a column of fours with precision, and they could march in a very creditable manner, although on the long marches no attempt was made to keep them in formation. But



it was in the camp arrangements that his organizing ability showed best results. A correspondent of the *Chicago Tribune* described them as follows:

“Once the camp is reached . . . things move along at a lively rate. The first to arrive seize their axes and make for timber. There are good woodchoppers among them, and little time is required to cut enough for the night. Each company carries its share to its camp circle, and almost before it can be realized the commissary has served the rations, and big juicy steaks are frying in pans on fire beds of live coals. There is no confusion over this work and the men are not permitted to quarrel over camp locations or supplies. After supper guards are placed, with a relief every two hours, and no man is allowed to leave the grounds without a pass. The town authorities are requested to arrest all men not supplied with these passes . . . . In breaking camp everything is done in a methodical way. Only a few minutes are required to clean, roll, and tie up everything. A wagon comes up, when there are wagons, and each company loads its blankets and pans, falls in behind, and takes up the march. If there is a sick man in the company, he rides. When the grounds are deserted there isn’t even a pin to be found. Only the smouldering fires tell the tale.”

The army maintained its own “intelligence service”. Men spied upon the railroads and former telegraph operators listened in on the messages at



the stations when they got a chance. But one night two sleuths of a very different variety camped with the army and tramped twenty-two miles with it the next day. William E. O'Brien, Iowa State Labor Commissioner, and his clerk joined the army in disguise, at the suggestion of Governor Jackson, to find out what it was like. They reported that they had started with little respect for the men, though "thinking the leaders were well meaning but misguided zealots." They returned with their opinions reversed: they were "satisfied that the majority of the men composing the 'army' were men who would work if they had an opportunity; and that, chimerical as the movement was," the rank and file believed in it. "The men", they decided, "could not be properly classed as tramps or vagrants, as these terms are commonly understood, although they had no means of support either visible or prospective other than the charity of the public, and their banding together made their continued presence in any community both a burden and a menace." The leaders were considered "thorough frauds, fakers, and schemers for their own selfish ends."

A "war correspondent" for the *Des Moines Capital*, who viewed the whole affair as "a piece of monumental folly", expressed more cynical views. The creed of the army he stated in the words: "We do not intend to starve, nor do we intend to work, and we do not intend to walk unless we cannot help it . . . . We are getting along so well that we

have been led to wonder why this plan of civilization had not been thought of before." The army had the sympathy of laboring men, and the honest farmers who furnished food had been impressed by the singing and flag waving. The result, he concluded, was that no one could criticise the industrials without criticising those who indorsed the movement, and this shut the mouths of politicians who wanted the labor vote.

At Avoca, Kelly gave a representative of the Associated Press a more definite statement of the demands of his army than had been hitherto expressed. The principal item was a scheme for putting the unemployed to work on projects for the reclamation of arid lands. By the time the work was completed, he thought, the workers could have saved enough to carry them through a year of farming on the lands that they had reclaimed, thus developing "from homeless wanderers into steady farmers and property owners." "If we can only get to Washington", he said, "if we can let the lawmakers see that we are breadwinners, honest and sincere, we will be successful in our mission, for our demands are not unreasonable". He added that Congress was not to be asked to issue any "special funds or bonds": the financing of the project was to be left entirely to the discretion of the lawmakers.

As the column neared Des Moines the farmers along the way were no longer so enthusiastic as those in the western part of the State and wagons



became scarce. Desertions reduced the force for a time to about eleven hundred, but Kelly firmly refused to allow his men to capture a train, insisting that such action would ruin the cause. For several days the army kept up its pace of twenty miles a day, and finished by attempting a forced march of forty miles into Des Moines, through the night of April 28th.

Des Moines had been making preparations for the invaders. The People's Party Political Club had appointed a committee, headed by the ex-presidential candidate of the party, General James B. Weaver, to arrange for the entertainment of Kelly's men. General Weaver sent word to Kelly at Atlantic that sentiment in Des Moines was very favorable to the army and that he was endeavoring to secure railroad transportation from Des Moines to Washington, with every prospect of success. The city authorities, on the other hand, who felt less of this favorable sentiment than the Populists did, prepared to prevent any demonstrations when the army arrived.

Apparently Kelly planned to enter the city in time for a great ovation on Sunday morning, but he reckoned without his host. It was a long hard march, the farmers gave little aid, it rained, and the General lost his way. Morning found the men in camp at Walnut Creek, where they were visited by General Weaver. When they finally approached the city they were detained by the police, shivering in the



rain, while the stragglers came up, and it was late in the afternoon before they marched to the stove works, an unoccupied three-story brick building where they were quartered during their stay. Brass bands and parades were forbidden.

On Monday night a meeting was held in the interest of the army in the Trades Assembly Hall. General Weaver, who was called upon to speak, compared the situation with the French Revolution. He told how in Congress he had seen petitions on the clerk's desk carted off by the janitor without having been read. The right of petition was a farce. "Here", says a reporter, "the crowd yelled for air", and the meeting was adjourned to the courthouse yard, where General Weaver explained what the army wanted: free silver to right the "crime of '73", and appropriations to irrigate arid lands in the West. Kelly announced that he had intended to be in Washington on May 1st but, although he had not been able to do so, he would persist if it took until Christmas.

During the sojourn of the army in Des Moines, Kelly also spoke to the students of Drake University, which made it seem advisable to the trustees of the institution somewhat later to issue a denial that they had any special sympathy for him. The Drake students did more than listen to Kelly, however: they investigated his army. They recorded what information they were able to obtain from the men and President B. O. Aylesworth compiled statis-

tics from this material. The results showed that of 763 men questioned as to their nationality, 549 professed to be American born. Of the foreign born, two-fifths came from the British Isles or British dominions, and more than a fourth from Germany. Most of the remainder were from western Europe. Eighty-three trades and occupations were represented among the 425 men examined who claimed to have any. In politics, 240 were Populists, 218 were Republicans, 196 were Democrats, 81 were undecided, and 11 were independents. There were 358 Protestants and 280 Catholics, while 114 said they had no religion. The average time since the men had been last employed was six months.

The *Iowa State Register* printed summaries of the stories of about fifty of the men. Many of them stated the wages at which they were willing to work—half a dozen wanted “union” or “standard” wages and the rest named amounts varying from one to two dollars a day. Seven said they were willing to do any work offered. “Of the men in Kelly’s army”, said a *Register* editorial, “perhaps not more than eight out of every ten belong to the real industrial classes, but the fact that the professional roadsters have taken to marching in armies is only a manifestation of the discontent that exists among laboring men.”

The Coxey fiasco at Washington occurred while Kelly was in Des Moines. At first Kelly had asserted that the industrial army movement had no



connection with the Coxey movement in Ohio; then he said that he would coöperate with Coxey if he arrived in Washington on time; now he attacked Coxey's lack of generalship. Coxey should have waited, he thought, until the western armies came up to support his demonstration. "His whole fate", said Kelly, "depends upon my army. . . . The whole west, especially the laboring element, is with me and my men in our mission. . . . The laboring men form the bulk of the voting population, and these demonstrations have already had their effect upon the western congressmen." Coxey, therefore, had no one but himself to blame for his failure.

The army had not been in Des Moines long before the food supply began to run short, and donations came in slowly. After a few days the camp at the stove works was reported to be so filthy and insanitary that there was danger of a pestilence. But the army grew: a new company was formed, and a count of the men on May 3rd showed thirteen hundred and fifty in camp. The city council asked Kelly to move on, but the men were tired of walking and the transportation question again became crucial, both for the industrials, who wanted to go east, and for the citizens who wanted to be rid of them.

At this juncture James R. Sovereign, the General Master Workman of the Knights of Labor, appeared unexpectedly in the city, declaring that the army would not walk out of Des Moines if it was necessary "to tie up all the railways in Iowa" in order to get



concessions from them. On May 3rd a delegation of three hundred laboring men, headed by General Weaver and local labor leaders, called upon the Governor and urged him to find some way to move the army. Governor Jackson agreed to make another attempt to get it to the Mississippi if it would agree to go by steamboat down to Cairo and thence up the Ohio. The railroads, however, steadfastly declined to furnish a train for anything less than passenger rates.

Finally a scheme for moving the army was concocted. Flatboats were to be built and the army was to be transformed into an "industrial navy" and sent down the Des Moines River. Des Moines carpenters furnished tools and helped in constructing the boats, while the industrials, working busily in "Kelly's navy yard", were visited by thousands of people who rejoiced in "the prospect of the departure of the enormous white elephant that has squatted down upon the city." Kelly had stayed too long. His army and its friends in Des Moines had begun to get on each other's nerves. On May 9th the army, consisting of about a thousand men, embarked on one hundred and thirty-four boats, and Des Moines breathed a sigh of relief.

There were indications that Kelly's hold upon his men was slipping before he left Des Moines. Lack of discipline, or the weather, or both, soon scattered the fleet along many miles of the shallow stream. Several boats manned by Sacramento men (Jack

London seems to have been one of the ringleaders) got away before the others and picked up provisions intended for the main body. At Ottumwa the famished army was fed, and visited by ten thousand people. After twelve days of river navigation the flotilla reached the Mississippi. There the flatboats were lashed together into a sort of raft which, with the army aboard, was towed down the river.

Southward General Kelly proceeded with his army, past St. Louis where labor leaders gave a flattering reception, on to Cairo where he destroyed his boats, and thence up the Ohio in barges. He was reported to be leading a force of at least twelve hundred men when he approached Louisville, but the whole ascent of the Ohio was a struggle with adversity. The people east of the Mississippi were less hospitable than the farmers of Iowa. Other industrial armies had traversed this region before and the novelty had worn off. After the first of May, Kelly's cause, like Coxey's, had declined. By July his men seem to have been scattered in various parts of Kentucky, Ohio, and West Virginia—many in a destitute condition, to the great annoyance of farmers upon whom they foraged.

On July 12th, more than three months after he had left San Francisco, Kelly appeared in Washington with a few of his men. Six hundred more, he claimed, were still on the way. The remnants of other industrial armies continued to straggle into



the capital and by the end of July there were twelve hundred or more encamped in the vicinity.

Although Populist Senators and Representatives talked and introduced resolutions, Congress did nothing for the unemployed. The living petition was a failure, and the petitioners faced starvation. General Coxey, now a Populist candidate for Congress, visited Washington and advised his men to beg until they were arrested and thus obtain food at public expense — advice which few cared to follow. The behavior of the industrials continued to be characteristic of law-abiding workingmen rather than of professional vagrants. Even during the starving time a reporter noted that in one of their camps the chickens from the neighboring farms wandered about with impunity, although the commander, wistfully regarding one of these birds, warned it that if the situation grew much worse he feared for its safety.

Kelly returned to California to work for the cause. Other leaders took to the road to raise funds. The authorities of Maryland and the District of Columbia at last took measures to dispose of the armies, and the men were shipped to cities in the neighborhood of their homes. By the middle of August the camps were deserted, and this strange crusade of the unemployed was ended.

DONALD L. McMURRY



## Lieutenant Jefferson Davis

Jefferson Davis! To many the name conjures up visions of the tall, angular President of the Confederate States of America. But to others, familiar with the story of frontier days in western Illinois and Wisconsin and in eastern Iowa, the name is a reminder of a young second lieutenant, fresh from West Point, reporting for duty at old Fort Crawford. Indeed, the crumbling ruins of old Fort Crawford recall to the mind of the visitor at Prairie du Chien many interesting tales of the frontier, among which the experiences and the romance of the gracious young officer from the South are of more than passing interest.

Jefferson Davis was only twenty years of age when he graduated from West Point in July, 1828, but he was every whit an officer, so his comrades testified. Distinguished in his corps for his military bearing and his lofty character, he was considered a perfect type of a southern "West Pointer". In stature he was tall and erect. His complexion was fair, his features delicate, his forehead high, and his blue eyes were large and clear. His whole conduct was indicative of self-esteem, pride, determination, and personal mastery.

Such was the young man who, after a vacation at

the home of his brother in Mississippi, took passage on a Mississippi River steamboat for Jefferson Barracks at St. Louis, accompanied by his faithful negro slave, James Pemberton. He arrived at Jefferson Barracks late in the autumn of 1828 and was assigned to duty at Fort Crawford which, at Prairie du Chien, shared with Fort Snelling at the Falls of St. Anthony the task of guarding the frontier of the Upper Mississippi.

In the early months of 1829 Davis was detailed to superintend the cutting of timber on the banks of the Red Cedar River in northern Wisconsin. The task consisted mainly of cutting the logs on the banks of the river, dragging them to the water, fastening them together in large rafts, and guiding them down to the Chippewa River and thence to the Mississippi. When they arrived at Prairie du Chien, they were used in constructing new fortifications and buildings at the fort. It was very hazardous work to direct some of the rafts over the rapids of the small streams, and the Indians were hostile and often very troublesome. But Davis's power to meet exigencies successfully carried them all safely through many a serious predicament.

Once the company was hailed by a party of Indians who demanded a trade of tobacco. As they appeared to have no hostile intentions, Davis and his men paddled over to the bank to parley. Someone in the party discovered, however, that their peaceful tones were merely a cloak to hide their

hostility, and warned Davis of the danger. The soldiers hurriedly pushed out into the stream and the Indians, yelling with fury, followed them. Realizing what little chance white men had against such experienced paddlers, Davis conceived the idea of rigging up a sail with a blanket. A strong and treacherous wind made this rather dangerous but, as it was a chance between certain death from the Indians and possible death from drowning, they were willing to risk every available chance of escape. The sail was quickly hoisted and the contrivance worked well. They soon sped on far ahead of their enraged pursuers and the Indians had to yield the race to Davis.

Not long after Jefferson Davis came to Fort Crawford, a strange coincidence occurred. George W. Jones, whom he had known at Transylvania University as a friend and classmate, was at that time living at Sinsinawa Mound, about fifty miles from Fort Crawford. "One night about nine o'clock", Jones writes in his autobiography, "I heard a voice hallooing outside. I stepped out and could barely see two men on horseback. The near one said:

'Does Mr. Jones live here?'

I replied: 'I am Mr. Jones.'

'Can we get to stay all night with you?'

'Yes', I replied, 'but you will have hard fare, for I have no bed. I can give you some buffalo robes and hobble your horses out, as my horse is. But where are you going?' I asked.



He replied: 'To Fort Crawford, at Prairie du Chien.'

'Where are you from?'

'From Galena.'

'Why, sir, you are twelve miles off your road.'

He then asked: 'Mr. Jones, did you ever go to college at Lexington, Kentucky?'

'Yes, I did.'

'Do you remember a college boy by the name of Jeff. Davis?'

'Yes, I shall never forget that dear boy.'

'Well,' he replied, 'I am Jeff.'

I jumped out, hauled him from his horse, and said: 'Dear Jeff! You shall come in and sleep in my bunk.' "

In the summer of 1829 Lieutenant Colonel Zachary Taylor, commonly called "Old Rough and Ready", was transferred from Fort Snelling to the command of Fort Crawford. Taylor brought his family with him — his wife, his son, and three beautiful daughters. The presence of the pretty young ladies doubtless spread commotion in the hearts of homesick young officers, and the young southerner proved to be no exception.

Soon after their arrival, however, Davis was ordered to Fort Winnebago, another important post on the northwestern border. It commanded the portage between the Fox and Wisconsin rivers on the waterway from the Great Lakes to the Mississippi River, and was the strategic center of opera-

tions in case of attack by the many tribes of Indians living in northern Wisconsin. Here again, he was busy with improvements upon the fort.

Life at Fort Winnebago was not as severe and trying as at some of the other frontier forts. Excursions, reconnaissances, card playing, and theatricals improvised by the young officers and their wives occupied the spare hours. Davis had several pieces of furniture made for the officers' quarters from the heavy timber of the region. Some of this furniture has been preserved and is highly valued by the antiquarians of Wisconsin.

In 1831 Davis returned to Fort Crawford and was ordered up Yellow River in Wisconsin to superintend the building of a sawmill. His diplomatic powers were severely put to test there, for it was no small task to keep the Indians in the neighborhood in a friendly state of mind. But he soon learned that flattery and good management were much cheaper and more effective than cold lead, and were also easier to apply. He gained the regard of all the surrounding tribes to such an extent that he was dignified with the title of "Little Chief". For one of his experience his success as superintendent of the sawmill was remarkable.

After his return from the Yellow River assignment, Jefferson Davis was sent by his commanding officer, Zachary Taylor, to effect the removal of the miners who were unlawfully working the lead mines in the vicinity of Dubuque. Trouble had been

threatening in the Galena-Dubuque region for some time. The Indians opposed trespassing on their land, while the miners felt that an ungrateful government was thwarting their right to exploit the rich veins of lead. A previous attempt to dislodge the fearless miners from the Iowa side had failed and young Davis faced a difficult task.

The situation was tense: feeling ran high and whiskey flowed freely. Davis, however, had known some of the miners previously at Galena and the influence of his friend, George W. Jones, aided him in handling the situation. Determined not to resort to force, he held many conferences with the miners in an effort to settle the question peaceably.

Mrs. Varina Howell Davis in her book, *Jefferson Davis, Ex-President of the Confederate States of America, A Memoir*, relates that on one occasion Davis had arranged to meet several of the miners for a conference at a little drinking booth in the vicinity of the mines. Before his arrival about twenty-five miners had already assembled. A friend, who had heard the miners threaten to kill the lieutenant if he entered the cabin, begged him not to go in. But Davis, his daring challenged to the fighting point, boldly entered at once, greeted them all pleasantly, and added, "My friends, I am sure you have thought over my proposition and are going to drink to my success. So I will treat you all". Whether admiration of his daring or a reconsideration had changed their attitude is not known, but whatever it



was, they immediately gave him a hearty cheer. Negotiations went more smoothly after that.

Davis worked patiently and persistently and did succeed in persuading the miners to leave the Iowa land and to recross the Mississippi. With the assurance that their claims to the lead-mine region would be recognized after a treaty had been made with the Indians to open the Iowa country for settlement, the miners packed up their tools and left peaceably with their families. The situation had been diplomatically and deftly handled by the southern lieutenant. Years afterwards Davis wrote of this episode, "It has always been to me a happy memory that the removal was accomplished without resort to force, and, as I learned afterward, that each miner in due time came into his own."

Like the sudden bursting of a storm spreading terror in a peaceful valley came the Black Hawk War in 1832 to cause alarm throughout northwestern Illinois and southwestern Wisconsin. Black Hawk, smarting under his alleged wrongs, recrossed the Mississippi from his new home in Iowa to his old home in Illinois, and thereby touched a match to the powder of the short and decisive struggle which brought together men and officers who later became famous on the battle-fields of Mexico and in the Civil War. Fate decreed that two men — one destined to become President of the United States of America, the other to guide the course of the Confederacy — were to participate in the Black Hawk

War. One was then a captain of Illinois volunteers; the other was a lieutenant in the regular infantry.

Mrs. Davis claims that the paths of the two men crossed during the campaign in Illinois. It is entirely possible that the officers met, and they may have messed together. The dramatic tradition, however, that Jefferson Davis administered to Abraham Lincoln the oath of allegiance to the Constitution of the United States seems to be ill-founded.

Although Davis conducted himself with credit to his company in the Black Hawk War he is remembered more for an event which occurred after the Indians had been crushed and Black Hawk captured than for any exploits during the struggle itself. When it was decided to send Black Hawk and his braves down to Jefferson Barracks, Davis was ordered to conduct them there. The prisoners were well treated by their young escort, for courtesy to a fallen foe was then considered one of the first obligations of "an officer and a gentleman". The proud old chief appreciated the kindly attitude of Davis toward him, and spoke of him thus in his autobiography:

"We started for Jefferson Barracks in a steam boat, under charge of a young war chief (Lieut. Jefferson Davis), who treated us with much kindness. He is a good and brave young chief, with whose conduct I was much pleased. On our way down we called at Galena and remained a short time.

The people crowded to the boat to see us, but the war chief would not permit them to enter the apartment where we were, knowing, from what his own feelings would have been if he had been placed in a similar position, that we did not wish to have a gaping crowd around us."

With Black Hawk in confinement at Jefferson Barracks, Lieutenant Davis again returned to Fort Crawford. His friendship for Sarah Knox Taylor soon ripened into ardent love which was reciprocated by the charming daughter of "Old Rough and Ready". Colonel Taylor, it is said, always considered his own presence necessary to the proper entertainment of his daughters' callers. One writer is inclined to think that the "young men of to-day would not care to have their prospective fathers-in-law quite so attentive as Taylor was to his prospective sons-in-law. He insisted on being present on the occasion of their visits; and when tattoo was sounded, he would yawn and say, 'It is time for all honest people to be in bed.' That meant that the young man had to leave."

The Colonel's presence did not bother Sarah's suitor in the least, however, for it was not long before their engagement was announced. When the news was told to Taylor, he remarked that he had the kindest feeling for his daughter's choice, but he had hoped that none of his daughters would ever marry into the army, for none knew better than he the trials and anxieties of a soldier's wife. His fair



daughter soon convinced him that that was too trivial an obstacle to place in their way. It was not long, however, until the "kindest feeling" changed: a bitter quarrel arose between Davis and Taylor — one which never abated.

A court martial had been ordered at the garrison. Taylor acted as president, while Davis, Major Tom Smith, and a young officer who had just reported for duty constituted the rest of the court. When they assembled, the young officer appeared in civilian clothes, offering the excuse that his uniform had been delayed at St. Louis. Taylor, who was a stickler for rules and customs, refused to consider any cases until the officer could take his seat in full uniform. An angry discussion over the question thereupon ensued between Taylor and Smith (a bitter feud already existed between the two). A vote was called for and, much to Taylor's surprise and chagrin, Davis voted with Smith to go on with the trial. Taylor became so enraged that he turned to Davis with an oath, declaring emphatically that any man who would vote with Tom Smith on a question like that could never marry his daughter. He forbade him to ever enter his home again.

The transfer of Davis from a second lieutenant in the infantry to the position of first lieutenant and adjutant of the First Dragoons in 1834 took him away from Fort Crawford to Fort Gibson, Arkansas. But if Taylor had hoped that the removal of Davis would change the attitude of his daughter, he was

very much mistaken. Distance did not affect their pretty romance in the least — in fact it was chiefly on account of the separation that Davis resigned his commission that year. On June 30, 1835, he severed all connections with the United States army.

Then it was, certain romanticists tell us, that he returned to old Fort Crawford to settle the dispute with Taylor. Miss Sarah told her father that, as he could allege nothing against the character of her fiancé, she intended to marry him soon. But neither time nor distance had abated the stubborn father's feelings, and he flatly refused his consent to their marriage. And so, regardless of silly feuds and stubborn fathers, it is said, the young couple planned to elope. At night, choosing the darkest hour before the dawn, they would steal forth from the fort; escape to the other side of the river; be secretly married at McGregor; and return to the fort as man and wife. Only the mighty river and the bluffs towering high above the elopers, mute witnesses to the thrilling escapade, could be trusted with their secret.

This, the romanticists tell us, actually happened. Some insist that they never returned to the fort but hastened away down the Mississippi to Kentucky. It is one of the legends woven from the traditions of the iron-barred window and the old sentinel post which still remain in Prairie du Chien as eloquent reminders of the romance of frontier days. But romance and facts often disagree. Historians say that it was not the silent bluffs of the Mississippi

that witnessed the marriage but a peaceful southern plantation in Kentucky. The true story is that shortly after the departure of Davis from the fort, Miss Taylor decided to go to live with her aunt in Kentucky. She engaged a stateroom on the steamer *St. Louis* and prepared to leave. A last appeal was made to her father but the firm and unyielding Colonel remained resolute. He never saw his daughter afterward, and the estrangement between him and Davis never healed during her life.

Miss Taylor remained with her aunt until Davis came for her after his resignation at Fort Gibson. Two of the Colonel's sisters, his oldest brother, and other members of the Taylor family were present at the marriage. The young couple then left for the Davis plantation, "Brierfield", on the Mississippi some thirty miles below Vicksburg. Their romance, however, was short lived for in the autumn of that year the young bride caught the fever then so prevalent in the lower Mississippi region, and died.

And so to-day, whether the reader admires or condemns the later career of Jefferson Davis, only kindly thoughts are aroused by his conduct as a young lieutenant in the Upper Mississippi Valley. Romance and adventure, hardship and pleasure, love and a great sorrow are the chapters in the story of Lieutenant Jefferson Davis.

DOROTHY MACBRIDE



## Comment by the Editor

### THE TEMPER OF THE WEST

“The voice of the West”, said Woodrow Wilson in 1911, “is a voice of protest.” It was ever thus. From the time of the Whiskey Rebellion to the days of the Non-Partisan League, the West has again and again expressed dissatisfaction with the conduct of public affairs. The feeling has always prevailed, except perhaps for a few years during the period of the Civil War, that the East — opinionated, intolerant, and domineering — has not been fair to the West. Socially, economically, and politically the two sections have been constantly at odds, and neither has quite understood the other, though the East has seldom tried.

The temper of the West has been preëminently one of restiveness under restraint — not the restraint of law and order self-imposed, but the repression of native inclinations by outside control. It is inherent in the very nature of the people. Descended from the most enterprising, adventurous, and versatile stock and reared in an atmosphere of opportunity and self-reliance, they have developed what James Bryce called “the most American part of America”. Independence in politics, distrust of big business, and a willingness to experiment are the

natural manifestations of this temper of the West — as natural as the champing and shying of a spirited horse that is restive to the rein.

In America the element of democracy has always been prominent, and the tendency of the people in the West to determine their own policies and select their own leaders has had a decisive effect upon politics. While the impatient disposition of the West has often been expressed in eager support of reform movements, those movements have invariably developed democratically from below upward. It is almost a truism to say that nothing, either good or bad, can be forced upon the West from above or without, and that is as true of leaders as of ideas or institutions. What chance has a political scientist to be elected mayor of Chicago or the immigration policy to be an issue in Iowa? The secret of successful leadership in the West is the espousal of a popular cause. To be sure the cause may sometimes be unworthy, and wise leaders are often deposed; but the political ways of the West have the merit of being spontaneous and sincere — valuable traits of democracy — and are apt to accomplish more than well-intentioned paternalism.

#### THE CRADLE OF NEW PARTIES

Most of the important political reforms of the last century have come out of the West. Born of the pressure of hard times and nurtured by wide-spread discontent, new parties have arisen in the Missis-

issippi Valley to protest against the prevailing characteristics of social and industrial development. Situated in the heart of the region from which these protests have emanated, Iowa has been the cradle of new parties and has furnished their most capable leadership. From the organization of the Republican party to the decline of the Progressives, there has been scarcely a movement in the name of democracy and human welfare which Iowans have not endorsed. Even Kelly's army received its heartiest encouragement in this State.

And yet, in spite of such a history, Iowa has no reputation for radicalism. Perhaps it is because the opposition to the "malefactors of great wealth" has been essentially sound, though specific remedies have often been visionary. More likely it is due to a fundamental difference in the object of the proposed reforms. Eastern radicalism is individualistic, almost anarchistic; while western radicalism is collective and social in character. It is comparatively unselfish — the wholehearted endeavor of coherent communities for the common good. That is the reason why Iowa — and the West — is the seat of social politics.

J. E. B.



# The **PALIMPSEST**

NOVEMBER 1923

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## THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE

The PALIMPSEST, issued monthly by the State Historical Society of Iowa, is devoted to the dissemination of Iowa History. Supplementing the other publications of this Society, it aims to present the materials of Iowa History in a form that is attractive and a style that is popular in the best sense—to the end that the story of our Commonwealth may be more widely read and cherished.

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH

*Superintendent*

## THE MEANING OF PALIMPSESTS

In early times palimpsests were parchments or other materials from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete; and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the records of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

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## Over the Rapids

Almost as by magic the canoes of Indians and traders, which for years had quietly glided up and down the Father of Waters, gave way to the steamboats and barges of modern commerce. While Iowa was still a Territory and before the advent of railroads, steamboat traffic on the Mississippi had become the principal means of transportation for the produce of the great valley. As the country developed, steamboating grew into a major industry with a rapidity seldom if ever paralleled in the history of transportation. There was glamour and pride of achievement in life on the Mississippi in those virulent days.

On the Upper Mississippi there were two rapids which, when the river was in its lower stages, seriously menaced navigation. In river parlance they were known as the "Upper" or "Rock" Rapids above Rock Island and the "Lower" or "Des



Moines'' Rapids, located a short distance above the mouth of the Des Moines River between Keokuk and Montrose. Of the two the Des Moines Rapids constituted the more formidable obstacle. According to Robert E. Lee, who made a detailed survey of both rapids in the autumn of 1837 for the Department of War, the Des Moines Rapids extended a little over eleven miles and had a fall of over twenty-four feet. There the Mississippi flowed, he reported, "with great velocity over an irregular bed of blue limestone, reaching from shore to shore, at all times covered with water, and through which many crooked channels have been worn by the action of the current. Its longitudinal slope not being uniform, but raised at several places above its general elevation, divides the whole distance into as many pools or sections. The passage over these reefs becomes, during low stages of the river, very difficult, in consequence of the shoalness of the water, its great fall and velocity, and the narrow and winding channels through them; as the river rises, its surface becomes nearer and nearer parallel to a plane tangent to the highest of these points, its extreme fall is diminished, and the only impediment consists in the rapidity of the current."

When the river was at its lower stages these rapids baffled the earliest explorers and fur traders, and no doubt proved a barrier to the redmen as well. Father François Xavier, writing in 1721 from hearsay, states that a "league above the mouth of the

Moingona, there are two *rapids* or strong currents of a considerable length in the Mississippi, where passengers are obliged to unload and carry their pirogues''. From this statement it would seem that even then, less than fifty years after the discovery of the upper river by Joliet and Marquette, there had come into existence a well-established custom of lightering boats over the rapids.

With the development of the fur trade a village of Sac and Fox Indians, with a considerable number of half-breeds among them, took up their abode at the head of the rapids about the year 1770. The chief occupation of these Indians was the service of guiding itinerant traders up and down the river and especially over the rapids. Luggage and merchandise were unloaded and the rugged braves, sometimes assisted by a mule but more often by their squaws, carried the cargo along the shore to the other end of the rapids. In return for these services they were paid in blankets, baubles, firearms, and whisky.

In 1803 the United States came into possession of the country bordering the Mississippi on the west. Two years later, during the summer of 1805, Lieutenant Zebulon M. Pike came up the river from St. Louis in a large keel boat propelled by sails and oars. On the morning of August 20th he arrived at the foot of the Des Moines Rapids. After having passed the first shoal with great difficulty he was met by a party of Sac lightermen consisting of four chiefs



and fifteen men in three canoes. With them was William Ewing, an Indian agent stationed at the head of the rapids, and Louis Tesson who six years before had obtained a Spanish land grant, set up a trading establishment, and planted an apple orchard near the Indian village. They "took out 13 of my heaviest barrels," wrote Lieutenant Pike, "and put two of their men in the barge to pilot us up."

Pike described the rapids as being eleven miles long, "with successive ridges and shoals extending from shore to shore. The first has the greatest fall and is the most difficult to ascend. The channel, a bad one, is on the east side in passing the two first bars; then passes under the edge of the third; crosses to the west, and ascends on that side, all the way to the Sac village."

In time keel boats, which were widely used by the immigrants who came to the Iowa country, were supplanted by steamboats. The *Western Engineer* was the first steamer to reach the Des Moines Rapids. *Niles' Weekly Register* for July 24, 1819, described her arrival at St. Louis and went on to say that the bow of this stern-wheel craft "exhibits the form of a huge serpent, black and scaly, rising out of the water from under the boat, his head as high as the deck, darted forward, his mouth open, vomiting smoke, and apparently carrying the boat on his back. From under the boat, at its stern, issues a stream of foaming water, dashing violently along. All the machinery is hid. Three small brass field



pieces, mounted on wheel carriages, stand on the deck. The boat is ascending the rapid stream at the rate of 3 miles an hour. Neither wind or human hands are seen to help her; and, to the eye of ignorance, the illusion is complete, that a monster of the deep carries her on his back, smoking with fatigue, and lashing the waves with violent exertion." The vessel carried an expedition sent by the national government to explore the Mississippi and Missouri rivers, and during the following summer of 1820 it proceeded up the Mississippi to the Des Moines Rapids but made no attempt to go farther.

Three years later the steamboat *Virginia* performed the epoch-making feat of ascending over the rapids, the first steam-propelled craft to accomplish the passage. This boat was about one hundred and eighteen feet long, twenty-two feet wide, and had a carrying capacity of about one hundred and sixty tons. She left St. Louis on May 2, 1823, bound for Fort Snelling with supplies. On the evening of May 6th, according to J. C. Beltrami, a noted Italian traveller who was on board, the vessel set out from Fort Edward but soon returned on account of being too heavily laden to "make a very difficult and dangerous passage at a place called the Middle of the Rapids of the Moine, nine miles above the Fort. By great good luck we escaped from a rock which might have dashed our steam-boat to pieces; it was only slightly damaged." The following day was spent in preparation for another attempt at negoti-

ating the rapids, probably by lightering some of the cargo over, and on the eighth the boat made the ascent "though not without difficulty".

Very soon, encouraged no doubt by the outcome of this first venture, other steamers attempted to run the rapids, and it is recorded that not all were as successful in their efforts as was the *Virginia*. The *Mandan*, after being on the river "forty days *en route* from New Orleans", arrived at the foot of the rapids, "which she attempted to ascend, but could get no higher than Filly Rock, on account of heavy draught and the want of a correct knowledge of the channel by the pilot." Later, however, her efforts were crowned with greater success and on at least one trip it is known that she reached Fort Snelling.

Within the next six or seven years steamboats became common on the river above the rapids and several began to operate on regular schedules. The business of river transportation gradually assumed the character of an organized industry. It appears that the *Virginia*, *Neiville*, *Rufus Putnam*, *Mandan*, *Indiana*, *Lawrence*, *Express*, *Eclipse*, *Josephine*, and *Fulton* were the first ten steamboats to go over the Des Moines Rapids and reach the head of navigation at the Falls of St. Anthony. Other steamers, including the *Pike*, *Red Rover*, *Chieftain*, *Enterprise*, *Mechanic*, *Java*, *Shamrock*, *Mexico*, *Warrior*, *Dubuque*, *Winnebago*, *Wisconsin*, *Olive Branch*, and the *William Wallace*, plied the Mississippi along the eastern border of the Iowa country. These pioneer



steamboats were commanded by such men as Joseph Throckmorton, Thomas F. Flaherty, John Shellcross, Henry Crossle, George W. Atchison, M. Littleton, James May, and J. Clark—names that are famous in the early annals of steamboating on the Mississippi. River transportation developed apace and became a very prominent factor in the marvelously rapid settlement of the Black Hawk Purchase.

Hand in hand with the growth of the steamboat traffic developed the business of lightering. By 1830 the Indians were being crowded out by white men, and five years later lightering had assumed the proportions of a stable, well-organized industry. Towns which became the seat of this industry naturally sprang up at the head and the foot of the rapids. In 1832 Jenifer T. Sprigg made a survey of the Half-breed Tract and laid out a square mile at the head of the rapids on the Tesson land grant and another in 1833 at the foot of the rapids for town sites. The commercial importance of these places, where Montrose and Keokuk are now located, was noted in a letter from John W. Johnson to the Secretary of War in 1833, and the comment was added that during periods of "low water the steamboats cannot pass that rapid, and are compelled to unload at those two places, which makes those situations more valuable than any other part of the reservation".

With respect to steamboating over the rapids the



depth of the water was classified in four stages, each presenting essentially different conditions. First there was the "high stage" during the spring and early summer months when all boats went over the rapids fully loaded. At this stage, of course, lightering was not necessary. At the "normal stage" the smaller steamboats did not need to resort to lightering, but the vessels of deeper draught were compelled to unload at least a part of their cargo on to lighter-barges which they then pushed over the rapids. The lightermen were employed simply as stevedores and were called "ratters". The river was said to be at "low stage" or "floating stage" when all steamers were compelled to unload and transfer their freight on lighters to vessels waiting at the other end of the rapids. Just before "low stage" was reached the steamboat companies were accustomed to arrange their boats above and below the rapids with respect to size and the amount of draught, those of deepest draught below and the lighter boats above in order to take advantage of the shallower water of the Upper Mississippi. The fourth, or "very low stage", was too low even for the lighters to operate and at this stage freight had to be transported around the rapids on land. In the earlier years the freight was carried along the river bank on the backs of men and burros, while the passengers walked, but after roads were built four and six horse wagons were employed for freight and the passengers rode in handsome stagecoaches. Still

later the construction of a railroad again altered the method of portaging.

The lightering business was a seasonal occupation which seldom lasted more than three months when the river was at low stage, usually during the months of July, August, and September but sometimes beginning in June and lasting until November. A majority of the men engaged in lightering disdained to take up any regular occupation during the remainder or greater portion of the year, preferring to loaf until they could again find employment at their favorite occupation or "profession" as they considered it. Perhaps a few would condescend to work several weeks in the winter putting up ice or to do odd jobs at the brewery to obtain free beer. In the spring they would go out into the hard maple forests which skirted the river all the way between Montrose and Keokuk, and help the half-breeds make maple sugar.

In running the rapids the lighters were loaded with great care under the personal supervision of the pilot or a trustworthy assistant. First a row of sacks, barrels, or boxes was laid the entire length of the boat down the center. Then wings were built on each side. Every precaution was taken to see that the cargo was properly balanced. Frequent measurements were made with a hook-gauge to see that the water line was not too near the top of the boat at any point. The loading also depended upon the stage of the river above low water mark and upon

the character of the cargo. If the material being handled was light and bulky the space in the hold of the lighter was sometimes filled to capacity, in which case a bail-way had to be left at intervals to enable the crew to bail out any water that might seep through the bottom of the boat.

The lighters were manned by experienced crews, generally consisting of three men — two oarsmen, one on each side, and a third, called the "gouger", who manipulated the sweep-oar at the stern as on lumber and log rafts. In addition, a special rapids pilot was in charge.

Piloting a Mississippi River steamer in the old days was nothing less than a fine art, and the rapids pilots were masters of their craft. They possessed marvelous skill, amazing knowledge, and resourcefulness equal to almost any emergency. They knew the exact location of every shoal, ripple, swirl, ledge, rock, and snag in the entire eleven miles of channel. They were absolutely familiar with every feature of the rapids in high water and low, in the dark as well as in the light. Indeed, that was part of their business and their success depended upon the accuracy of their knowledge and their skill in manipulating the vessels.

Intense rivalry existed among the pilots, and many a reputation was made by some act of heroism or marred by some circumstance over which the pilot had absolutely no control. Occasionally bitter jealousies sprang up and malicious trickery was re-



sorted to in order to play even with the other fellow. Pilots have been known to roll a small boulder off the stern of the boat at some strategic location in the channel where a hated rival on the next boat coming down would be likely to get "hung up" on it, to his great surprise and consternation.

Running the Des Moines Rapids was always dangerous and scarcely a day passed without some narrow escape on the rocks, while almost every year witnessed a major accident frequently involving the loss of life and boats. As early as 1828 the *Mexico* struck Steamboat Rock but managed to navigate as far as Nashville before she keeled over. The wreck lay there partially submerged for forty years. The *Mechanic* and *West Newton* met a similar fate on Mechanic's Rock, while the *Cornelia*, the *Northwest*, the *J. W. Van Sant*, and the *Alex Mitchell* were also wrecked in the rapids. Many a proud packet has been "hung up" on the rocks and floated off by sinking a lighter-barge on each side, fastening them securely to the vessel, plugging the holes in the sunken barges, and then pumping out the water. Thus the steamboat was lifted sufficiently to free it from the reef. Only the most foolhardy captain ventured to subject his craft to the perils of the rapids during the "floating stage" and then only under the most urgent circumstances. On such occasions the steamer was lightened as much as possible and a "sound and buoy" route was laid out in advance. This was done by a rapids pilot who pre-

ceded in a yawl, sounding every foot of the way and setting buoys at short intervals.

There were many famous rapids pilots, but among them the names of "Sip" Owens, John Barber, Joshua Gore, Valentine Speaks, Robert Farris, and his son, Charles H. Farris, were prominent as men of conspicuous ability. The latter held the record for taking a steamer over the rapids in sixty-one minutes.

The downward freight consisted principally of sacked wheat, oats, potatoes, onions, a little corn, and considerable "Galena cotton", as the lead ore from the mines of Dubuque was called. The up-bound freight was of an entirely different character, consisting chiefly of farm implements, stoves, machinery, salt, coffee, sugar, and occasionally some gold coin to pay Indian annuities at the government agencies. Immigrants' belongings — a motley lot of odds and ends such as household furniture, bedding, and livestock — made up no small part of the northward traffic.

It was not unusual to see such boats as the *Muscatine*, with Captain Jim West in charge, steaming down the river with her decks loaded to the guards and pushing from one to five barges loaded with grain. The formation of these flotillas was as follows: if there was only one barge, it was pushed directly ahead of the boat; if two, they were lashed side by side as a pair ahead of the steamer; if three, they were arranged with one ahead and a pair be-









hind, all in front of the bow; four were placed two pairs tandem in front; in case of five there were three in front and one lashed to each side of the steamer. Large steamboats have been known to handle as many as fifteen loaded barges. As may readily be seen, this amount of traffic created a tremendous business for the lightermen. When the river development was at its peak in the early seventies, the average annual cost of handling the freight over the rapids amounted to about \$500,000.

In the fall when traffic was heaviest and the river was low it was no uncommon sight to see from fifteen to twenty palatial steamboats lined up at the wharves, both at Keokuk and Montrose, awaiting their turn to be lightered over the rapids. All these boats, with their lights, their crowds, and their music, presented a brilliant spectacle. The hustle and excitement of transferring the passengers, of loading and unloading the freight, and of "wooding up" the boats always furnished a thrill for even the most sophisticated.

During the busy season of the year competition in securing prompt services of lighters became very keen and the bidding spirited to a degree of recklessness. On ordinary occasions, when business was normal and lighter-boats and "ratters" plentiful, the loaders received from ten to fifteen cents an hour for transferring the freight from the steamers to the lighters and the oarsmen from one to two dollars a trip. When business was brisk and hands

scarce the loaders sometimes received as much as sixty or seventy-five cents an hour, the oarsmen from four to five dollars a trip, and the rapids pilots from ten to twenty-five dollars, according to their reputation and skill. The oarsmen frequently made two down trips and sometimes three in a single day, depending upon the demand for their services and their ability to get back to the head of the rapids quickly.

The trip down over the rapids was always exciting and often perilous. The oarsmen's duties, rather strenuous while they lasted, ended the instant the lighter touched the levee at Keokuk. If prospects for another trip were good, the men would leap for the shore and race to catch the bus that ran regularly between Keokuk and Montrose and which would haul them back to Montrose for a dollar, but when they were short of money or the chances of a second trip were poor they usually walked back. After the railroad was completed the oarsmen patronizingly helped the firemen "wood up" and carried water for the privilege of deadheading back on the engine.

At Keokuk the lighters were turned over to "ratters" who transferred the cargo back to the steamboat or to other steamboats and reloaded the lighters with up-bound cargoes. These lighters were then towed back up the rapids, at first by man power, then by oxen, later by four, six, and eight horse teams, and at last by steam towboats. Some-



times the lightermen propelled the boat up the rapids by poling, bushwhacking, cordelling, or warping.

Isaac R. Campbell may be regarded as the pioneer in establishing the lightering industry. For several years he operated keel-boat lighters of fifty or sixty tons burden. In 1837, Daniel and Adam Hine succeeded Mr. Campbell in the lightering traffic, and introduced the regular lighter-boats which were specialized flatboats. With the increase in business a steam towboat, the *Dan Hine*, was put into operation and as time passed other small light-draught steamboats were added. These men continued in the lightering business until the St. Louis and Keokuk Northern Packet Company gained control.

The lightering season ended abruptly each year with the close of navigation on November 15th, when all marine insurance stopped. Consequently, as the end of the season approached, there was likely to be an increasing demand for lightermen, and the resulting high wages attracted many floating laborers who drifted in to take advantage of the situation. To meet this condition the "ratters" organized a kind of labor union, probably the first to be developed west of the Mississippi. Though it protected the local members against competition from outsiders, there was no effort to regulate wages or hours. Among themselves it was every man for himself. They stayed on the job during the busy season as long as they could stand, often working as many as eighteen or twenty hours a day for weeks at a time

under the stimulus of high wages and good whisky. But woe betide any outsider who attempted to break into the ring for there was many a ruffian "ratter" who would stoop to any end in the maintenance of the closed shop on the rapids.

Originally, brawny Americans and numerous Irishmen of the rough and ready type constituted a large proportion of the lightermen and "ratters" as well as the roustabouts on the steamboats. They were a hard-drinking, loud-swearing, devil-may-care race. After the Civil War, however, the Irish were supplanted by ex-slaves who in a few years practically monopolized steamboat labor. On warm summer evenings these negroes used to come ashore with their banjos at Montrose and Keokuk, while their boats were waiting to be lightered, and play and sing the old plantation melodies until after midnight. They were fresh from the southland, freed from the tribulations and sorrows of slavery, but the old life was still vivid in their consciousness and they sang with hearts full of former memories and new inspiration.

Most of the lighter-barges were built up the Ohio River in the region of the "prime oak" timber, floated down the Ohio, and towed up the Mississippi to the rapids. On one occasion at least, during the winter of 1859-1860, John Bunker took a crew of men up the Des Moines River to a sawmill near St. Francisville, Missouri, where there was plenty of good native oak and built two fine lighter-boats which



were christened the *Hawkeye* and the *Sucker*. These were floated down to Keokuk in the spring after the ice went out.

Staunch though the lighter-boats were, they were subjected to such terrific strain, hard usage, and continual scraping on jagged rocks that they were frequently in need of repairs. For this purpose two shipyards were maintained at Montrose — the upper one owned by John Bunker and the lower by George Anderson. For many years they did a thriving business.

When a boat began to leak dangerously, it had to be dry-docked for repairs. This was accomplished by bringing the boat alongside the shore, placing the ends of four long skid timbers under it, and hoisting the other end of the skids up on wooden horses. Cables were then attached to the boat and by the use of a "crab", which was a large capstan operated by a horse, the boat was hauled up the skids. The lower ends of the skids were then jacked up so that the repairmen could work with ease under the boat.

A crew of eight or ten expert boat carpenters made quick work of their job and the calkers took their turn. Each crack would be tightly filled with oakum. The sound of the calkers' mallets ringing merrily all day long with musical rhythm could be heard several miles up and down the river. After the calkers had finished their work, the cracks were daubed with hot pitch applied with a piece of sheep-skin fastened to the end of a round wooden handle.



So efficient were the workmen that very seldom over a day and a half or two days were required for the entire process of repair. The boats, "as good as new", were then lowered back into the water.

In the course of time, as the development of the country increased the commerce on the upper river, there sprang up a demand for speedier and cheaper means of transportation over or around the Des Moines Rapids. Railroads were rapidly pushing westward, and a company was organized to build a line between Keokuk and Montrose. This road was begun in 1855 and commenced carrying freight around the rapids the following year. The coming of the railroad caused great consternation among the lightermen, for they realized that the whistle of the locomotive had sounded the death knell to their occupation. It was, indeed, the beginning of the end. Much to the relief of the public the railroad lowered the lighterage charge to fifty cents a ton, between a third and a fifth of what it had been. The Hine brothers, nevertheless, stoically continued to operate their towboats until the government canal was opened in 1877. That put an end to the occupation of lightering steamboats over the Des Moines Rapids, and a once flourishing industry now lives only in the memory of a few of the older inhabitants.

BEN HUR WILSON

## The Scotch Grove Trail

The Highland Scot has ever displayed canny foresight, extraordinary thrift, steady industry, and sturdy fortitude in the face of obstacles. The more intimate feelings and emotions of the Scotchman — his tender sentiments of romance and love of home — have been disclosed in the poems of Robert Burns and the songs of Sir Harry Lauder. Such were the characteristics of the “Hielanders” who came in the late thirties to Jones County, Iowa, and built their log cabin homes in the timber along the sparkling waters of the Maquoketa River.

Theirs is a simple story of pioneers to whom the fertile prairies of Iowa were a promised land for men who were eager to become “lairds” of many acres. At the same time it is a tale of what they were prepared to give Iowa in return. It was a long, hard trail from the bleak Highlands of Scotland by way of Lord Selkirk’s Red River Settlement to Jones County, Iowa, yet this was the route by which Scotch Grove pioneers came to the new Territory and added their strength to the laying of the foundations for a Commonwealth.

The lot of these people had been a hard one in the desolate northern shires of Caithness and Sutherland in Scotland. Their houses for the most part were one story huts called “shielings” built of un-

cut stone, the chinks stuffed with moss, and the roof covered with turf or thatched with straw. If a "shielsing" had a window it was covered with a bit of fish bladder, or the stomach lining of a sheep, or perhaps a piece of paper soaked in fish oil. Chunks of dried peat from the bogs furnished fuel for the rude fireplaces; and the "reek" or smoke from the smouldering fire often choked the inmates of a hut when the wind, swirling down the chimney, fanned the smoke into the room.

The struggle for food, too, was severe. The "Hielanders" rented the land from the several lords and sundry earls, paying a large share of their crops for the use of small patches of arable soil. They raised "kale" or cabbages, a few turnips, some oats, a little barley, and a few potatoes. They pastured sheep on the open or common land where a limited quantity of grass grew among the heather and gorse. The flocks of sheep were limited in number, however, for the gentry preferred to save the grass for deer and rabbits in order that game might be plentiful when his lordship wished to hunt. If, in addition to a few sheep, a family owned a "coo", they were considered well to do — almost equal to the gentry.

Women and girls spun wool into yarn with the distaff and spindle and wove thread into cloth on a hand loom. Oftentimes the thread was colored and woven into a plaid with the stripes and colors proclaiming the clan to which the family belonged. The women, also, dried oats and barley in a pan over the



fire and then ground the grain into meal with a "quern"—laborious work, all of it.

Yet in spite of poverty and the hard struggle for existence the "Hielanders" were happy folk, deeply religious, and loyal to the gentry until the clearances began. The general introduction of sheep farming by the nobility led to widespread eviction of the smaller tenantry. During 1812 and in the spring of 1813 evictions became so general in the Highlands that distress was everywhere prevalent. For a time serious riots occurred. Nevertheless, the Duchess of Sutherland proceeded to clear her land of tenants so as to convert her Highland domain into grazing land for sheep and into deer forests and shooting preserves. In two parishes in Sutherlandshire, Clyne and Kildonan, a single sheep farm displaced a hundred agricultural tenants with all the distress that had attended the earlier enclosures in England. It is recorded that when the Duchess of Sutherland went for a drive the indignant peasants would ring sheep bells in derision as her carriage passed. In vain, the Sutherlandshire tenantry sent a deputation to London to seek from the government some alleviation of the unemployment and destitution. There was no power in the Home Office to offset the forces of economic change.

Hence it was that the agents of Thomas Douglas, Earl of Selkirk, found the Kildonan tenants eager to accept his offer to transport them across the Atlantic to his newly established colony on the Red

River of the North where broad acres and farm implements and a home were to be theirs free. Applications came in from some seven hundred evicted tenants but less than a hundred could be taken. Little did those picked men and women realize the hardships they were to face or perhaps they would have been less eager to undertake the adventure.

Having secured a controlling interest in the Hudson's Bay Company, Lord Selkirk acquired from that organization a tract of 116,000 square miles of land lying west and south of Lake Winnipeg. It comprised roughly the area now included in the Province of Manitoba and the northern part of North Dakota and Minnesota. This tract was chiefly unbroken prairie traversed from south to north by the Red River and from west to east by the Assiniboine — a region which includes some of the best wheat land of North America. Lord Selkirk's purpose in securing control of the Hudson's Bay Company and in obtaining this huge grant of land was largely philanthropic: he hoped to afford relief to his evicted countrymen by establishing a colony in the heart of this land of promise.

Accordingly, a shipload of employees had been sent out in 1811 to prepare the way for the settlers to follow. Delays in starting from the port of Stornaway in the Hebrides and unforeseen disasters along the way retarded the arrival of the advance group at the junction of the Red and Assiniboine



rivers until August, 1812. Hasty preparations were then made to receive the second band of emigrants who arrived two months later. The officers and employees of the North-West Company, rival of the Hudson's Bay Company in the fur trade of the North, looked upon the newcomers as intruders in a territory explored by their men and in which their trading posts had long been established. Various impediments were thrown in the way of the Selkirk emigrants. From the first season, hostility developed between the settlement and the North-West Company which soon led to an open feud.

Such was the situation into which the evicted tenants of Sutherlandshire were headed when they gathered at the port of Stromness in the Orkneys. On June 28, 1813, the colonists embarked on the *Prince of Wales* and put to sea under convoy of a sloop-of-war. It was a terrible voyage. Ship fever — now known as typhoid — broke out, and the confinement and congested quarters proved fatal to many. The ship's surgeon was among the first to succumb, the disease spread rapidly to passengers and crew, and there were many burials at sea. Another misfortune was the blundering of the skipper who put the colonists ashore at Fort Churchill, instead of carrying them on down the western coast of Hudson's Bay to York Factory where Selkirk expected the expedition to land.

The settlers, weakened with fever, made what preparations they could for passing the winter at



Fort Churchill. On the sheltered, well-wooded bank of the Churchill River about fifteen miles from the fort, they built rough log houses. Thus it was necessary to make a thirty-mile trip by sledge or on snowshoes to the factory store to secure oatmeal and other provisions. Early in November, however, partridges appeared in such numbers that fresh meat was not wanting.

In the spring the colonists took up the overland journey to York Factory, travelling on snowshoes, drawing stores and provisions on rough sledges, camping at nightfall, and moving forward with the first dawn of the northern morning. The strongest of the party went ahead to beat the trail for the women and midway in the long procession marched the Highland piper, "skirling" a "pibroch" which filled the trudging emigrants with the unbending pride of their race. Thus the weary stragglers carried on to York Factory where they met with a hospitable reception. After a short halt they continued their journey by boat and reached Fort Douglas at the Forks of the Red and Assiniboine rivers early in the summer of 1814.

There, on the site of the present city of Winnipeg, Governor Miles MacDonnell welcomed the new colonists, allotted to each head of a family one hundred acres of land fronting on the Red River, and supplied the settlers with horses, arms, ammunition, tools, and seed. Help was given them to erect their log cabins along the bank of the river. By autumn

houses and barns were built, potatoes and other vegetables were harvested, each family possessed some poultry, and a few cows were held in common. That winter was the first since the earliest settlers had arrived at the Forks in 1812 that the colonists found it unnecessary to move south to the Pembina River in order to be near the herds of buffalo for their food supply. Surely this was the promised land.

But the hostility of the North-West Company to the apparently firmly established colony grew apace. It was fanned to white heat by Governor MacDonnell's proclamation prohibiting the servants of the North-West Company from taking pemmican, or dried venison, from Selkirk's land, and the officers of the company began a resolute campaign of subtle policy against the colony. During the winter of 1814 Duncan Cameron at the North-West trading post, Fort Gilbralter, across the Red River entertained the Kildonan men and women at gay parties. By offers of free passage to Upper Canada, by a generous promise of land to each settler who would desert the colony, and by threats, cajolery, and bribes he secured the defection of a large number of the settlers. When the widowed mother of two of the pioneers who afterward came to Iowa was asked to desert the settlement she replied, "As for me and mine, we will keep faith. We have eaten Selkirk's bread, we dwell on lands he bought. We stay here as long as he wishes and if we perish, we perish."



During the summer of 1815 a notice signed by Cuthbert Grant, who had been appointed by the North-West Company to command the Bois-Brûlés, or French-Indian half-breeds, ordered the rest of the settlers to retire immediately from the Red River. The capture of Governor MacDonnell and an attack on the colony compelled the remnant of Selkirk's colonists to depart. They sorrowfully quitted their homes and proceeded in canoes to the mouth of Red River thence across Lake Winnipeg to a new abode at a trading post on Jack River. With fierce exultation the employees of the North-West Company applied the torch to cabins and barns and trampled the crops under foot.

In the meantime another party of settlers had been recruited from Sutherlandshire and were en route for the abandoned Red River Settlement. With these "Hielanders" in the expedition of 1815 came the new governor, Robert Semple. Word of the approaching reinforcements induced the fugitives on Jack River to return to the site of their colony and upon the arrival of Governor Semple and old neighbors from Kildonan the Scotch began to rebuild their ruined homes.

The influx of more immigrants, however, only added fuel to the flame of hatred between the rival fur companies. During the following winter the blaze kindled and in the summer of 1816 the conflagration swept down upon the Red River Colony in the attack of Bois-Brûlés led by Cuthbert Grant.



Governor Semple and a score of men lay dead after the fatal clash at Seven Oaks on the afternoon of June 19, 1816. Again the ill-fated colonists withdrew down the Red River.

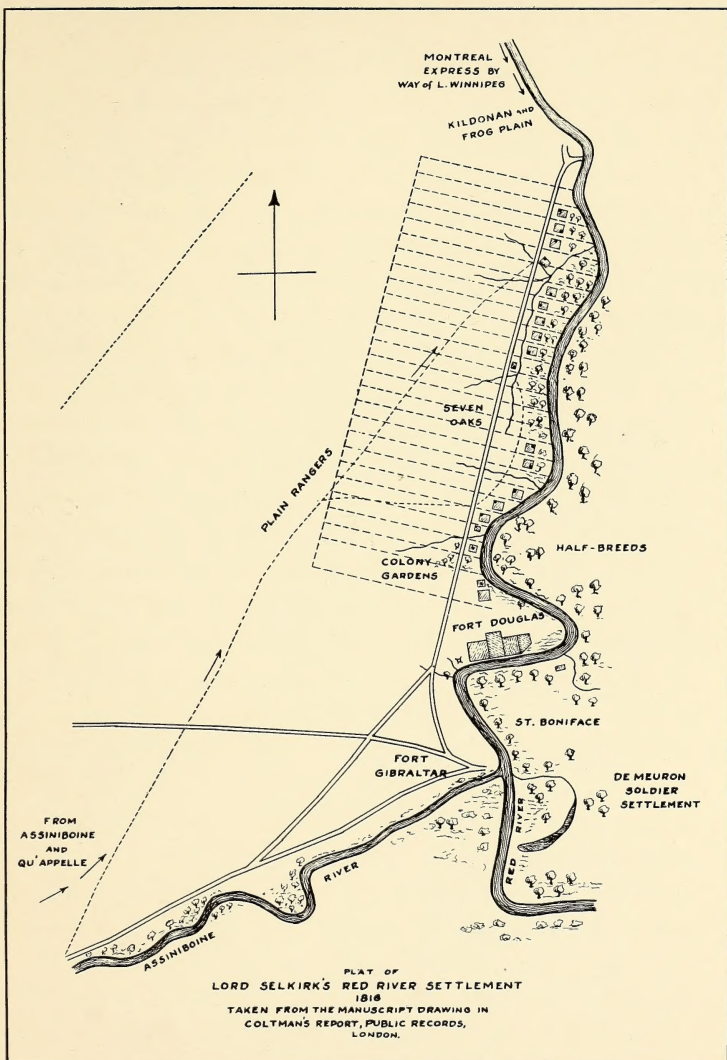
Lord Selkirk himself now came to the rescue of his unhappy people. With a force organized from the disbanded De Meuron regiment of mercenary soldiers of the War of 1812 he swooped down on Fort William, the headquarters of the North-West Company on Lake Superior, and captured it. Then in 1817 he visited the Red River Settlement where he was able to rally his scattered colonists and to assure them of protection. He listened sympathetically to their complaints, shook the hand of everyone, deeded them tracts of land for a church, a cemetery, and a school, and directed that the settlement should be called "Kildonan" after their old home in Scotland. To the soldiers of the De Meuron regiment he allotted land on the east side of the Red River. Arrangements were made for an experimental farm on a large scale, while public roads, bridges, and a new mill site were planned. Moreover, a treaty with surrounding tribes of Indians gave the settlers assurance of freedom from attack by the savages.

Lord Selkirk's vigorous assault upon the North-West Company, however, resulted disastrously for him. Arrested and tried for his part in the affair he was found guilty and fined, while those concerned in the massacre of Seven Oaks were acquitted.

This broke the spirit of Selkirk and he died in 1820 a disappointed man. One year later a union was effected between the Hudson's Bay Company and their ancient foes, the North-West Company.

Apparently the troubles of the Scotch colonists on the Red River were over and no longer would they be ground like wheat between the upper and nether millstones of the two rival fur companies. But they were not happy. Farming in this country of long, cold winters and short summers was but little more of a success than it had been in the bleak, rough Highlands of Sutherlandshire. Moreover, there was no market for surplus products when there were any. The school and church promised by the Hudson's Bay Company had not materialized. True, a rector of the Church of England came to the colony; but shades of solemn leagues and covenants and Jenny Geddes with her stool, could Scotch Presbyterians be satisfied with a minister of the Church of England? Grasshopper plagues, too, ruined the crops for two or three seasons and as in the early days of the colony, hunting had to be resorted to for a living. The arbitrary rules of the Company caused much dissatisfaction. Agents inspected everything that was shipped out and all furs had to be sold through the Company. The colonists called the Hudson's Bay Company the "Smug Old Lady".

To the credit of the Company, be it said, however, that honest efforts were made in behalf of the colony. Sheep were brought from the United States at great



THE SELKIRK SETTLEMENT





expense, and horses and cattle were imported from England at heavy cost. The experimental farm projected by Selkirk was like a baronial estate. At one time when grasshoppers had destroyed the crops, agents of the colony purchased some three hundred bushels of wheat, oats, and peas at Prairie du Chein, Wisconsin, and when the seed was finally delivered at Red River Colony the cost to the Company was said to be £1040 sterling.

Confronted with all these disadvantages of the Red River Colony while the children grew to maturity, the canny Scotchmen began to ponder ways of improving their situation. Word filtered back over the Red River trail from St. Paul of opportunities to buy cheap farms in the rich valley of the Mississippi River in the "States". Many Swiss immigrants whom Selkirk's agents had sent to the Red River Settlement in the early twenties had already migrated to the reputed Eldorado of the South. Accordingly, in 1835 Alexander McLain went down to the recently opened strip of territory in eastern Iowa known as the "Black Hawk Purchase". Like Joshua of old he explored the country, and carried back a glowing report of a fertile prairie land, well watered and having sufficient timber for building, located about fifty miles from Dubuque.

After his return to the settlement, a group consisting of John Sutherland, with his ten sons and two daughters, Alexander Sutherland, David McCoy, Joseph Brimner, and Alexander McLain with their

families set out on the thousand mile trek to a new promised land. They loaded into their Pembina carts a few possessions — bedding, cooking utensils, coarse flour, pemmican, clothing, tools, and some relics brought from Scotland — and departed on the long, hard trip.

The Red River or Pembina cart was a home invention. They were rude, wooden vehicles put together without a particle of iron. The wheels were without tires, were five or six feet in diameter, and had a tread about four inches wide. From the base of the rectangular body of the cart extended the heavy shafts between which one animal, usually an ox, was harnessed with strips of rawhide. Each cart could carry a load of six or eight hundred pounds which was protected from rain by a buffalo robe or canvas cover. These carts, while crude and clumsy in appearance, would go where another vehicle would flounder.

Day by day the caravan crawled slowly southward, while the heavy wheels which had never known grease kept up an incessant creaking and groaning. When night approached the carts were drawn into a circle with the shafts pointing inward and within this temporary fortification camp was pitched. The animals were either allowed to graze or tethered on the outside of the circle. Every precaution was taken to guard against an Indian attack, and the men stood watch in turn until dawn. Rivers were forded and numerous sloughs and marshes



crossed, the wide-wheeled carts leaving a deep track in the soft ground of the lowlands. Mosquitoes, black flies, and gnats tormented the plodding caravan; and the mid-day sun beat down without mercy upon them. Sometimes the carts sank to the hubs in mud and water; again the travellers were covered with a thick coat of dust as the carts in single file rolled along the Red River trail. Sometimes roving bands of Indians approached and killed a cow which the settlers could ill afford to lose.

On they came, making about fifteen miles a day, across the present State of Minnesota and down the west side of the Mississippi River to Dubuque. The same fortitude that enabled the tenants of Kildonan to brave the perils of a long ocean voyage and to endure the hardships at the Red River Colony enabled this first group of Scotch pioneers to push on to the banks of the Maquoketa River. Although the effect of the long and toilsome journey of almost four months was traced on nearly every face in lines of care, the sight of their new home restored hope. Along the banks of the river, as far as they could see, a belt of timber marked its course. Before them stretched the fertile prairie in an almost unbroken level to the sky line. The prairie grass was most luxuriant and the fall flowers, richly tinted, bloomed on every side. The future loomed large.

In 1838 a second band came from the Red River Colony to the Scotch Grove settlement. In this party, among others, were Donald and Ebenezer

Sutherland and Donald Sinclair with their families. Mrs. Sinclair had been a waiting maid in Scotland and her stories of court life were in continual demand by her companions. Her husband was a peaceable, devout man yet fearless in defending his rights. It is related that on this trip one of the bachelors in the group spoke insultingly to Mrs. Sinclair, who replied, "If you say that again, I'll slap your mouth."

"I'll do more than slap your mouth," was the man's retort.

Suddenly from somewhere appeared Donald Sinclair who had by chance overheard the conversation. "Ye'll hae to slap me, first, mon," he said quietly, and then he proceeded to administer a thorough thrashing to the man who had annoyed his wife.

This trip, like the first emigration, occupied the entire summer and the weary travellers arrived at the Scotch Grove settlement in the early autumn. Again in 1840 another delegation followed the route of the Red River trail to St. Paul and thence south to the Iowa prairies of Jones County. In this group were Donald and John Livingston, David Esson, and Lawrence Devaney with their families. The Devaneys quit the caravan at Dubuque, where a son was born.

In some ways this was the most difficult and discouraging journey of the three principal migrations to Iowa. On the Red River section of the trail the guide took sick and one of the party, in endeavoring

to fill his place, led the caravan through the swamps of Minnesota for days and finally emerged at the spot where they had entered. Grandmother Livingston was an old lady when this journey began. She could have remained with friends on the Red River but she insisted upon making the trip. She rode in one of the jolting, springless carts and was warned not to try to get out of it without help. Somehow she eluded the vigilance of her relatives one day and in trying to climb down from the box of the cart alone, she slipped and broke a leg. What was to be done? No doctor, no splints! The men set the broken bone and bound the fracture with bark for splints and strips of sheets for bandages. Feather beds were piled in the cart to make the suffering woman as comfortable as possible but the jolting of the rude conveyance was unbearable. As soon as the headwaters of the Mississippi were reached the men constructed a crude raft on which the injured woman was placed and one of her sons was assigned the task of poling the raft downstream. The route of the caravan led away from the river and great apprehension was felt about the progress of the raft and its occupants. When the emigrants again approached the river several days were spent in anxious waiting before the raft was sighted floating downstream. This journey like the others occupied the entire summer but eventually the wayfarers, Grandmother Livingston and all, were welcomed by friends who had preceded them to Scotch Grove.



During the years of the migrations to Jones County other Scotch "Hielanders" from Red River Colony came southward but were deflected to other localities. James Livingston, Alexander Rose, and Angus Matthieson, for instance, settled in Upper Scotch Grove where the town of Hopkinton is located; while the McIntyres, Campbells, and some of the Matthiesons crossed the Mississippi to the lead-mine region opposite Bellevue, Iowa.

Pioneer days at Scotch Grove and in Upper Scotch Grove were laborious, yet the settlers were happy for nature was kind to them and the future was filled with promise. Log cabins were built, gardens were spaded, and the fields were planted. Everyone worked — men, women, and children.

To-day a visitor stopping at one of the prosperous homes of Scotch Grove may observe two round stones, six inches thick and about two feet in diameter, used as a door step. These old quern stones, brought from the Highlands to Red River, and thence to Iowa, are mute reminders of the days when two Scotch women, squatting on the floor, alternately pushed and pulled the handle of the upper stone while the wheat, poured by hand into a hole in the middle of the top stone, was ground into coarse flour between the corrugated faces of the quern and fell from the edges to a cloth on the floor below.

Bee trees along the Maquoketa supplied the settlers with honey which was stored in improvised

kegs made from thick logs. Bunches of wild grapes mixed with the honey made a tasty sauce to spread on hot biscuits. The cooking was done in the fireplaces where a crane supporting a heavy iron kettle was swung over the fire. "Scones", or thin biscuits, were baked in skillets which stood on short iron legs over a bed of coals at the edge of the fireplace. Fried pies — a favorite dessert — were made by cutting a round crust the size of a saucer, pouring cooked sauce on one half, folding the other half over and crimping the edges together, then frying the pastry in a skillet or kettle of hot grease. To-day a Selkirk teapot, a few copper utensils, some heavy iron skillets, lidded pots with little legs, and a square tin candle lantern with perforated sides — surviving relics of the long trail — are the prized possessions of the descendants of these Scotch pioneers.

For many years the nearest mill to the Scotch Grove settlers was on Catfish Creek and the nearest market for grain and hogs was Dubuque, fifty miles distant. Then it took a day and a half to go to market while to-day the grandchildren of these pioneers make the trip to Dubuque in almost as many hours. Two of the Livingstons from the Upper Grove on separate trips to Dubuque were frozen to death in prairie blizzards. The wife of one of these men, mother of nine children, set to work with Scotch fortitude to keep the farm and to raise and educate her family. Her success was another triumph for Scotch frugality and industry.



The Jones County settlement prospered materially, and at the same time religion and education were not neglected. The First Presbyterian Church of Scotch Grove was organized in the log house of Ebenezer Sutherland in 1841, and has been the center of the community life of the township to this day. In 1851 a church was built and ten years later a larger and finer house of worship was erected by these devout Scotchmen. The eccentric Michael Hummer, of "Hummer's Bell" fame, was the first minister who served this parish. Other strong men have since been ministers of the Scotch Grove church and their influence has extended wherever the children of the pioneers have gone.

The older men and women who came from Red River used the Gaelic language extensively, especially when asking a blessing at meals or in offering prayers in public. During the early seventies a Scotch evangelist came to Scotch Grove to assist the minister, Reverend John Rice, in conducting a "protracted meeting". One Sunday, the evangelist consented to preach a sermon in Gaelic. As the impassioned words of his discourse rang out from the pulpit in the language they loved so well, tears welled up in the eyes of these men and women of the long trail and rolled unheeded down their cheeks.

The pioneers also provided schools for the "bairns", first at different homes in the settlement, then in a log cabin schoolhouse built near the center of the township. In 1860 a more commodious schoolhouse was erected. The teacher boarded



'round and received sixteen dollars a month for his services. Nor was higher education neglected, for the rolls of Lenox College at Hopkinton contain the names of many Scotch Grove boys and girls who went to college in the days when this privilege was accorded only to a small number of Iowa's young men and women.

Little wonder was it that in such a locality where industry and religion went hand in hand and where love of home and interest in education were outstanding traits that patriotism, too, was genuine and vigorous. The records of the Civil War show that no men were drafted from Scotch Grove Township; in fact, the township furnished more than its quota of volunteers. The muster rolls of the World War reveal the names of many lads whose grandfathers and great grandfathers followed the long trail from the Red River to Iowa.

The descendants of these pioneers are proud of their families and their Scotch blood. Why shouldn't they be? The story of the long journey from the Highlands of Sutherlandshire to Lord Selkirk's Colony and by ox-cart brigade to Iowa is a tale of courageous adventure. Let them revere the flowers of the clans to which they have a right to belong. Let them honor their "tartans" or "plaids"—backgrounds of green or black or red or blue with fine overlay in lines of contrasting color. Let them thrill with pride to hear the songs of Old Scotland. It is their rightful heritage.

BRUCE E. MAHAN

## Comment by the Editor

### IOWA DIALECT

Literature is likely to be language in a formal mood. Perhaps it could be described as language in its parlor manners, if it is permissible to use that expression in its colloquial sense. At all events written language tends to become rigid, dignified, and nice. It loses the flexibility of pronunciation, the friendly familiarity, and the flavor of the dialect from which it sprang. Except for the terms of science and invention, which are taken bodily from the classical Greek or Latin, language grows from the speech of every-day life.

There was a time not long ago when dialect words were regarded as barbarisms to be studiously avoided, but now they are recognized as an essential part of the language of a people. Forsooth, nearly all new words that are particularly apt, picturesque, and full of the genius of idiom are dialectic. Dialect words have personality. Being linguistically youthful, they have the vitality and unabashed candor of children. They might be conceived as the second generation of slang grown highly respectable like prosperous tradespeople, and yet they have none of the stilted refinement of literary usage.

Every language was once a dialect, born in igno-



rance. And it has come to pass that the talk of the common people, even the illiterate, is the fountain of perpetual youth in any tongue. The speech of the southern negro is rich in distinctive dialect. Narrow interests, provincialism, new environment, and an atmosphere of easy democracy are the conditions in which dialects thrive. Under just such circumstances — so prevalent in pioneer Iowa — much of the “abusing of God’s patience and the King’s English” has probably occurred.

Life on the Mississippi in early times was especially conducive to the coining of dialect words. The lightering crews on the Des Moines Rapids spoke the lingo of Mark Twain’s rivermen, and probably contributed their share to river dialect. Who but a denizen of the levee would know what “filling and backing” meant, what a “sawyer” was, or understand the leadsmen’s cry of “mark twain”? A stevedore on the lighter-boats was called a “ratter”—perhaps because he carried grain in and out of the hold like a rat, just as the men who handle the baggage of tourists in Yellowstone Park are called “pack rats”. A workman who accepts less than union wages or takes the job of a striker is colloquially known as a “rat”, and the antagonism of the lighter loaders toward outsiders may have earned for them the epithet of “ratters”. Another peculiar expression of the lightermen was “gouger”, referring to the member of the boat crew who manned the sweep at the stern, because he gouged



his oar into the bed of the shallow stream and thus guided the craft between the rocks.

The settlers of Iowa came from little provincial communities at the ends of the earth—from the villages of New England and the farms of New York, from the tobacco plantations of Virginia and the blue-grass region of Kentucky, from the Red River of the North and various parts of the Old Country—and they brought their dialects along. Here they found fur traders, miners, and half-breeds, each group speaking a tongue of its own. And they also encountered a new environment and devised new modes of living—all of which stimulated the use of new words. No wonder the language of early Iowans was rich in dialect.

A careful study of dialect words, as Frank L. Mott suggests, would help to determine the geographical origins of the settlers of Iowa. Did they come predominantly from the South, as some suppose, or were they chiefly of New England stock? Examine their speech. The words “quern”, “reek”, “skirl”, “pibroch”, “scone”, “pemmican”, and “Pembina cart” would place the Selkirk Scotchmen of Jones County, though the story of their migration were lost.

J. E. B.

# The **PALIMPSEST**

DECEMBER 1923

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## THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE

The PALIMPSEST, issued monthly by the State Historical Society of Iowa, is devoted to the dissemination of Iowa History. Supplementing the other publications of this Society, it aims to present the materials of Iowa History in a form that is attractive and a style that is popular in the best sense—to the end that the story of our Commonwealth may be more widely read and cherished.

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH

*Superintendent*

## THE MEANING OF PALIMPSESTS

In early times palimpsests were parchments or other materials from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete; and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the records of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

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JANE CLARK KIRKWOOD

# THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY JOHN ELY BRIGGS

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## The Scrap-Books of a Quiet Little Lady with Silvery Hair

In his preface to *The Life and Times of Samuel J. Kirkwood*, Mr. H. W. Lathrop speaks of Governor Kirkwood's "faithful wife" who had from time to time during his official life gathered from the public press facts relating to him "and treasured them up". Whoever remembers Mrs. Kirkwood during the almost thirty years that she outlived her distinguished husband knows that no one could improve upon Mr. Lathrop's description of her attachment to her scrap-books. She loved them; she planned for them; and she "treasured them up".<sup>1</sup>

There are evidences that these scrap-books were often loaned to staff correspondents and special feature writers; and in his biography of *Samuel Jordan*

<sup>1</sup> It was after her death in her one-hundredth year, that these scrap-books were added to the Kirkwood Collections in the library of the State Historical Society of Iowa, through the kindness of Mrs. Kirkwood's nephew, Mr. C. S. Lucas of Iowa City.



*Kirkwood*, as published in the *Iowa Biographical Series*, Mr. Dan Elbert Clark tells of his gratitude to Mrs. Kirkwood who "generously placed valuable materials at the writer's disposal", and in his notes and references he makes mention of the "small" and the "large" Kirkwood scrap-books.

Both of the scrap-books are of the "Mark Twain" type, with columns of gummed lines to which the clippings are attached. The small book of one hundred pages with two columns to a page was apparently made up first and contains about two hundred and forty clippings, ranging in length from three lines to nine pages. The large book—more intimately associated with Mrs. Kirkwood during the extraordinary one score and ten years above the traditional allotment of three score years and ten that were meted out to her—is a volume of one hundred and forty-eight pages with three columns to a page and contains approximately four hundred clippings. Between the leaves of both books are scattered loose clippings and other memoranda to the number of one hundred and thirty pieces, covering a period from 1863 to 1921.

It appears that Mrs. Kirkwood had always been "quite a hand to save the papers". Sometimes she clipped news or editorial paragraphs relating to her husband and laid them away, usually without dates or data indicating their source; sometimes she preserved the entire paper or the page containing a marked paragraph; and occasionally the date, the

name of the town in which the paper was published, or other memoranda were written in pencil on the margin. "A scrap for my scrap-book", reads one marginal note written in her ninety-seventh year. Here and there bits of the handwriting of Governor Kirkwood and of Mr. Lathrop appear — showing the interest of the Governor and his contemporary biographer in the collection.

Such marginal notes as "An extra copy of the paper containing the sketch", "From Lizzie", "J. M. H.", "For Aunt Jane", "For your collection", and the presence of many duplicates bespeaks the interest of friends and relatives. Eleven copies of the newspaper story of Mrs. Kirkwood's ninety-third birthday are preserved in the large book and loose clippings. Now and then an item is blue-penciled — apparently by the editor who sent the paper. Some of the articles bear the corrections of an experienced proof-reader. One of the untrimmed clippings has attached to it the printed notice of a clipping bureau — which might have been a voluntary contribution, or possibly Mrs. Kirkwood sought such assistance in collecting materials for her scrap-books.

Before pasting the clippings in the scrap-books, Mrs. Kirkwood as a rule cut away folio lines and marginal memoranda, though sometimes she wrote in pencil between the columns the name of the newspaper from which the item was clipped. Seldom, however, are there any dates — except as they occur



in the body of the clipping. But with a little study, two-thirds of the items are easily identified; and they represent one hundred and seventy-five different newspapers. Of this number one hundred and ten are Iowa papers, while the sixty-five papers published beyond the borders of the State range from New York City to San Francisco. About ninety-seven per cent of the clippings relate directly to Governor Kirkwood. One wonders whether there is in existence in Iowa another such collection of the opinions of the public press of a given period on any one subject.

The idea of bringing the clippings together in scrap-books, however early conceived, was apparently not carried out until after Governor Kirkwood had retired from public life. While the small book contains items dealing almost entirely with Governor Kirkwood as Secretary of the Interior and with "political gossip" and "editorial speculation" regarding "The Next Senatorial Term", here and there in the early pages a reference to his nomination as Representative to Congress from the Second Congressional District (1886) slips in, revealing the fact that the scrap-books are a backward look over a sunny track. Perhaps it was the wealth of material dealing with this period that led Mrs. Kirkwood to begin the first book with the clippings pertaining to the Governor's position in President Garfield's Cabinet; and it may have been her intention to work backward from that period.



That Governor Kirkwood had often been urged to write his autobiography and had thought very seriously of so doing, we learn from various clippings in the scrap-books. "We have been urging Gov. Kirkwood for years to write a sketch of it" (the famous council of the war governors of the North), reads a clipping from the *Des Moines Register*, "and he has always promised to do it, but in the hurry and crowded occupation of a busy life he either forgets it or is unable to find the time to do it. But if he does not do it pretty soon we shall sue him for breach of promise . . . . Such men as he owe a duty to the Commonwealth to preserve such things to its future record and renown, and it is hoped that he and several others who like him were prominent in early Iowa and during the war, will at least preserve such facts to the future Iowa in some form, either by way of autobiography or otherwise."

It may have been with this thought in mind that Mrs. Kirkwood began the first scrap-book. In the end Governor Kirkwood seems to have compromised on the autobiography by assisting Mr. Lathrop in compiling *The Life and Times of Samuel J. Kirkwood*. This book was published in 1893 and Governor Kirkwood died on September 1, 1894. On the flyleaf of the first scrap-book is a column of figures written by Mr. Lathrop referring to certain pages where clippings are marked for special attention. It is the belief of those who knew him best that this was done under the guidance of Governor Kirkwood.

The clippings relating to Governor Kirkwood's position in the Cabinet and his seat in the United States Senate overflow into the large scrap-book; but the hand that "treasured them up" is less certain, and as early as the twenty-fourth page there creeps in the first indirect reference to the death of Governor Kirkwood in an *Interesting Historical Paper* reprinted from the May number of the *Western Reserve Law Journal*. In the unorganized mass of material which fills the remaining one hundred and twenty-four pages of this book, in the duplicated clippings, as well as in the many pages of newspaper reports relating to the death of the Governor, one reads the story of a great sorrow; and one realizes, too, that only a great love could have given the "faithful wife" who "treasured them up" the strength and the courage to go forward with her clippings.

Little by little whatever she had gathered found its way into the large scrap-book with little regard to time or subject matter. Here, for example, are complete newspaper reports of Governor Kirkwood's speeches (one as old as the Civil War and some as new as the campaign in the Second Congressional District in 1886) with a sprinkling of newspaper comment and expression of popular sentiment regarding the Governor in the seventies and eighties. Here also are long sketches of his life and public career, with a wealth of tribute, reminiscence, and anecdote. Some of these were



written in the twilight of an honored age and others when the two generations who had "loved and honored him as no other man" bowed their heads and said, "What a strange Iowa it is without Kirkwood".

"Kirkwood, like Lincoln," reads a sketch in one of the Chicago papers which apparently was issued shortly after Governor Kirkwood's death, "was largely indebted for his wonderful popularity to the promulgation by those who knew him best of numerous anecdotes and pleasantries which never failed to win the love and confidence of his fellow-men. Ex-Gov. Kirkwood belonged distinctively to that type of public men, now rapidly passing away, which was bred to hardship and adventure, and which shared the ruggedness and self-reliance characteristic of the generation in which they lived."

Anecdotes regarding Kirkwood appear to have been great favorites with the public press. One newspaper would print a story, which would remind a second paper of another; and these reprinted would call forth new ones. Sometimes these anecdotes were gathered together under the heading of "Kirkwoodiana" or "Kirkwoodisms" which were copied in whole or in part in the newspapers of California, Maryland, New York, Ohio, Minnesota, Illinois, Indiana, and Georgia.

And how the Iowa newspapers and the Iowa people loved these Kirkwood anecdotes! They deal with the Governor's public service and political



faith, with his horse, his mill, his farm, his dress, his manner, and his personal appearance. They deal with his ability as a public speaker, his sharp repartee, his grim sense of humor, his Lincoln-like gift for apt and homely illustration, and his fearlessness in the expression of opinion. And they deal with his prophetic wisdom, his sense of fair play, his absolute integrity, his faith in the State of Iowa, and his hold on the affections of the common people. It is not surprising that many of these anecdotes found their way into Mrs. Kirkwood's treasure books.

Scattered throughout seventy-eight pages, mingled with items on the "Old Man Eloquent" in action and "The Rustling of the Leaves of Memory", are many columns filled with the reports of the birthday anniversaries of Governor Kirkwood, ranging from his seventy-sixth birthday, when he "is in good health and with a mental vigor unabated" and is urged by the public press to write his autobiography, to his eightieth anniversary which is reported as "A Notable Day" when a few of his intimate friends met in a body and without public demonstration found their way quietly to the Governor's residence.

Many clippings of various lengths and from various sources tell the story of "The Surprise Party" which occurred less than a year before the Governor's death when friends from all parts of Iowa met under the leadership of Hon. Buren R. Sherman

“to make him a social call” at the Kirkwood home. It was a beautiful thought, beautifully carried out; and it was said after his death that this tribute gave the Governor greater happiness than did any public honor in his long public career. “It speaks volumes of praise for the man”, said the Chicago *Inter Ocean*, “when in the midst of a great political campaign, with every man fighting for his own political faith as though the salvation of the country depended upon it, the people, without regard to party differences, unite in an old fashioned surprise party to do honor to ex-Governor Kirkwood of Iowa, as they did at his home in Iowa City last Wednesday.”

Under the headline of “Goodness is Greatness” a note sounded in the speech of Judge Wright received State-wide publicity with much newspaper comment. “Without praise”, said Judge Wright when addressing the venerable War Governor on this occasion, “I can say that you are the emphatic exemplification of the fact that goodness is greatness; and whether one rules, or plows, or sows, doing one’s duty is goodness”. Upon which one newspaper comments: “Of all the eulogies of the War Governor that have been written and pronounced, the words of Judge George G. Wright are the purest gold. ‘Goodness is greatness’ . . . Place it on his monument. Repeat it to every college student, to every school boy. Send it on the wings of the wind, ‘Goodness is greatness’ ”.

Here and there in the last third of the large scrap-



book — added apparently long after the clippings which recorded “Iowa’s Sorrow”—are full newspaper accounts of the unveiling of the Yewell portrait in the Capitol at Des Moines when Governor Kirkwood was “too feeble to be in attendance to hear the words of praise which his old associates were about to bestow upon him”. Likewise there are reports of the exhibition of the portrait in Iowa City where for “forty-eight hours, hundreds and hundreds . . . gazed in admiration and veneration upon that dear and familiar face looking out from the frame of gold”. It is recorded that Governor Kirkwood admired the picture very much, but insisted that “It is better looking than I am.”

Through the entire collection of clippings in the scrap-books runs the theme of the Civil War. Only a few of the references to the great conflict are actual snapshots; but there are a multitude of flashbacks in reminiscences and anecdotes of, and tributes to “Iowa’s Old War Governor”, in reports of G. A. R. reunions, Memorial Day celebrations, and in the ever present reference to the war in the speeches of Governor Kirkwood. This habit of referring to the Civil War was sometimes deplored in Democratic papers as “waving the bloody shirt”—to which Governor Kirkwood was wont to reply (as he did in a stump speech in Indiana) in such language as the following:

“Now, my friends, I have a profound respect for the bloody shirt. [Loud cheers.] I sent to the field



from my own State of Iowa 50,000 as brave men as ever marched. Many of them wore the bloody shirt before they returned home. [Cheers.] Many of them were buried in their bloody shirts, and never came home. I say that the bloody shirt, to me, symbolizes patriotism as pure, and devotion to duty as earnest, and courage as splendid as this world has ever seen. [Enthusiastic cheers.] I say to you that I have seen men, living and dead, wearing the bloody shirt, the latchets of whose shoes no Northern man who sneers at it ever was or will be worthy to unloose. [Renewed cheering.] I have a profound respect for it, and I have a profound contempt for the spirit that will urge any Northern man to sneer at it. [Great applause.]”

With no other knowledge of the man than that revealed by the headless and dateless collection of clippings “treasured up” by “his faithful wife”, one would learn that Governor Kirkwood’s devotion to the Union was the great passion of his life, that the agitation for the extension of slavery called into play all his latent force of character, that he followed out the issues of the war to their bitter end, and that he watched and worked with intense interest and passionate earnestness throughout the period of reconstruction. From a reading of these clippings one can easily understand the echo and the re-echo of the “right side and the wrong side in that bloody contest”, and the voiced distrust of the “dominating element” of the “wrong side”.

Said Governor Kirkwood in a Memorial Day address years after his retirement from the Cabinet: "I want you to teach your children and teach them to teach their children and their children's children to the end of time, that in that fierce struggle which cost so much you were right and they [the South] were wrong. . . . They believed they were right, they were earnest and sincere in believing that they were right, but they were wrong."

That there was a period when the charm of Kirkwood for the masses was a powerful factor in Iowa politics, no one who reads the testimony of the one hundred and ten Iowa newspapers represented in Mrs. Kirkwood's scrap-books can doubt. It was a factor that had to be reckoned with by the politicians — a sustaining, perplexing, or irritating factor depending upon the viewpoint. Long after the Governor had said of himself that "my time for such work is past", the persistent Kirkwood influence manifested itself in such newspaper stories as "A Reporter has a Chat with Hon. Samuel J. Kirkwood", "Interview with Iowa's War Governor", "Governor Kirkwood on the Situation", "Governor Kirkwood on the Judgeship", "Governor Kirkwood on the Pound Bolt", "Governor Kirkwood on the Temperance Question".

Fragmentary and in a style that is careless and often crude and on occasions somewhat mixed as to facts, the press clippings of Mrs. Kirkwood's scrap-books tell a beautiful story of Iowa's admiration and



love for Governor Kirkwood, and of the Old War Governor's faith in and devotion to the young Commonwealth.

"Kirkwood belongs to Iowa". "No man can serve Iowa as Kirkwood can". "We are for Kirkwood first last and all the time". "Old Sammy carries his Senatorial seat with him — So his tailor says". "If Kirkwood wants it, the rest can hang their aspirations on the weeping willow tree". "The people of Iowa can *trust* Samuel J. Kirkwood, and they *know* they can trust him". "There is more hard meat underneath the rude shell of his exterior than there is in a dozen of your soft-shells who mistake noise for argument and self confidence for ability". "Iowa farmers are not willing that the Old Man Eloquent with his uncouth but sterling honesty and war-tried patriotism should be succeeded by anyone but himself". "We want the Old War Governor kept there until the Great Reaper comes after him". "No man has ever been such a popular idol to Iowa people". "We say the people of Iowa can make him a candidate if they want to, and that there is no power in Iowa which can stop it". "Kirkwood is the choice of the *people* and not the creature of a ring". "The common people of this State will see to it that their choice is respected, regardless of the tricks of a few very small politicians". Such, without retouching, are a few expressions of confidence in "The Old Man Sensible" by "nine-tenths of the people of this State"; and



one gathers that the periodical popular outbreaks of "Kirkwood belongs to Iowa" and "We want Kirkwood" often brought consternation to those who were ambitious of "standing in his shoes", or "getting his seat", or "wearing his mantle".

The scrap-books are a veritable storehouse of evidences of the truth that Kirkwood, in spite of the fact that he was forty-two years old when he came to Iowa, had been thoroughly assimilated by his adopted State and really "belonged". From the day he took up his residence in Johnson County the State's interests and problems were his; and when speaking in the East or in the West his statistics and his illustrations were largely drawn from Iowa, with many a fond reference to "what we think about it in Iowa".

"In the country where I live, which I wish to remark is the finest State in the whole Union", said Kirkwood in 1883, "we are rearing the typical American, the western Yankee, if you choose to call him so, the man of grit, the man of nerve, the man of broad and liberal views, the man of tolerance of opinion, the man of energy, the man who will some day dominate this empire of ours".

In the same speech he adds: "You must know that the true Bostonian's sun rises behind Plymouth Rock, stops for a time over Faneuil Hall in Boston, and sets near the mouth of the Hoosac Tunnel. But when we get him out here, and knock a little of the nonsense out of him, and rub the varnish off, we find him to be made of true, tough, solid fibre under-

neath, and by no means a man of veneer. He turns out a pushing, energetic and useful citizen”.

Nor is this scrap-book history of her distinguished husband without its record of Jane Clark Kirkwood, the “faithful wife”, who had from time to time during his official life gathered from the public press facts relating to him “and treasured them up”. One of the early clippings in the small book reads: “At the Saturday reception of Mrs. Garfield, her only one, Mrs. Kirkwood, who occupied her assigned place in the receiving line, was singled out as ‘Grandma Garfield’ by some who were superloyally anxious to pay respects to as many of the family as possible. This was not entirely agreeable to a well-preserved matron of 60, and she repudiated the honor with proper feminine spirit”. In the forty years to be granted her after this “Saturday reception”, Mrs. Kirkwood never lost the “snap” revealed in this clipping. When the photograph of Mrs. Kirkwood, which is used as a frontispiece in this number of *THE PALIMPSEST*, was taken for the State Historical Society of Iowa in what was then her ninety-eighth year, it was the privilege of the writer to accompany her to the photographer; and one of the delightful memories of that occasion is Mrs. Kirkwood’s repudiation of one of the photographer’s proofs because, she said, “it makes me look like an old lady!”

“Mrs. Kirkwood, the wife of the Secretary”,

reads a clipping from the New York *Tribune*, "is described as a quiet little lady with silvery hair, who has been comparatively little in society." Commenting upon this characterization an Iowa newspaper declared that "this is the way that snobdom affects to patronize a lady superior in every respect to any of its component elements. The 'quiet little lady with silvery hair' has been 'in society' all her life. There has never been a day that she has not mingled with respectable people; and these compose the highest and the best society. Mrs. Kirkwood is able, by virtue of her character, to confer honor upon any company in Washington. That dissipated mixture of good, bad and indifferent people which at the Capital is called 'society' might well be proud should Mrs. Kirkwood condescend to patronize it."

With the memory of the golden wedding anniversary more than a quarter of a century old and with the shadows lengthening to the eastward, there was little for Mrs. Kirkwood to add to the scrap-book history save newspaper references to herself. Newspaper headings had grown bolder and blacker since the days when she figured in the public press as one of the "Queens of the Cabinet", and generous half-tone cuts from photographs of herself had taken the place of the etchings from India ink drawings that were copied many times in the eighties. Many late tributes to her and through her to the memory of "Iowa's Grand Old Man" are to be found under such headings as "Widow of the Old War Gov-



ernor"; "Mrs. S. J. Kirkwood Honored by the Twenty-second Iowa"; "Old Settlers' Picnic — Mrs. Jane Clark Kirkwood Present"; "Mrs. Kirkwood Nonogenarian"; and "Mrs Kirkwood One and Ninety".

Beyond the ninety-third birthday there are no more anniversary items pasted in the scrap-book — not because Mrs. Kirkwood had lost interest in her clippings: the book was full. So the record of those remarkable birthdays that carried her so close to the century mark joined the loose clippings of the Civil War period, letters that she apparently had hesitated to put into the company of printed matter, a black and gold funeral card announcing the death of Governor Kirkwood, a full front page on the work of Vinnie Ream Hoxie with special reference to her statue of Governor Kirkwood in the Capitol at Washington, notices of programs at the Kirkwood School in Iowa City, a newspaper story of her Red Cross work at the age of ninety-six, an account of the totem pole at Seattle, and verses relating to the Kaiser.

And finally the last eight pages of this treasured record are filled with notices of the deaths and of the funeral services of relatives and friends. Brothers and sisters who had shared her experience in the timber-cleared country of pioneer Ohio, old neighbors and friends who had helped to rear the young State of Iowa, business and professional associates of an early elder day whose interests were inter-

woven with her own — Mrs. Kirkwood had outlived them all!

The Mansfield, Ohio, law office, and the Coralville, Iowa, mill were now memories of three score years and ten; the old "Concord stage" that wallowed through the snowdrifts between Iowa City and Des Moines was only a tale of long ago; the "Queens of the Cabinet" of the Garfield administration had passed into history these many years; the beloved adopted soldier-boy, had he lived, would have been a man of seventy-eight years; a generation of men and women had grown up about Jane Clark Kirkwood since the observance of her own golden wedding anniversary. What wonder that the yellowing fragments of the scrap-books that opened the gate into such a wondrous land of memories were counted among the most precious treasures of her life!

It is with a feeling of reverence that one replaces the loose clippings and closes the scrap-books. Like the Old War Governor they, too, belong to Iowa.

Whatever may have been her motives, Mrs. Kirkwood has in her scrap-book clippings bequeathed to us a rare album of pictures of the "Great Commoner of Iowa", the "Genius in Homespun", the idol of a people for two generations. Here is something to tempt artists born in Iowa with "the divine fire in their souls".

Pictures of the dust covered miller, with his trousers stuffed into his boot tops and a shockingly bad

hat on his head meeting the elegant General Augustus Caesar Dodge in a series of debates which "were second only in importance to the joint debates between Lincoln and Douglas the previous year in Illinois." What could be more picturesque than the "ox-cart" episode!

Pictures of the newly elected War Governor, not over careful in his attire, stumping the State and pleading with passionate earnestness for men, money, aid, and "one united effort to save the government in this time of peril".

Pictures of a dominating figure in homespun during those dark days when "Iowa had not a surplus dollar to its credit" and when his task as a loyal Governor "exacted the highest form of patriotic faith, a patience that would not be overcome by any difficulties, a perseverance that could not be impaired, a knowledge of men that would permit him to influence them under the most unfavorable conditions, an ingenuity, a faculty of invention which would be always present and ready to meet and satisfy the most exigent demand, and a constitution that would bear up under incessant strains, both mental and physical".

Pictures of the meeting of two great commoners, Samuel J. Kirkwood, as Governor of Iowa, and Abraham Lincoln, as President of the United States, when the harassed commander-in-chief of the army and navy asked "What can we do for your State?" and the loyal Governor of the young Commonwealth



of Iowa replied, "The question is not, Mr. President, what you can do for my State, but what my State can do for you." Two great commoners between whom there was said to be "a mental and moral as well as a physical resemblance". Two giants of their day, developed by "the noble alchemy of toil". Men who sprang from the people and knew them and sympathized with them; who comprehended their wants and their tendencies; and who reaching the heights of political preferment yet ever kept in closest touch with them.

Not without dramatic quality is the scrap-book story of the nomination of Kirkwood as "Governor against his will"—a story of an anxious moment when the conservative delegates in a Republican State convention faced defeat by the supporters of General James B. Weaver. Suddenly, to the surprise of friends and foes, "a man of kingly stature with hair and beard flowing long and white as snow, arose in his place, secured attention from the chair and with hand uplifted, said with impressive force: 'Mr. Chairman and gentlemen of this convention, I present for your consideration as nominee for governor that grand war governor of Iowa, Samuel J. Kirkwood' ". And when asked by what authority use was made of Kirkwood's name, the man of snow white hair and beard "again arose with uplifted arm and said in tones that reached every nook and corner of Moore's old opera house, 'I nominate

Samuel J. Kirkwood by the authority of the great Republican party of Iowa!' ” In the wild enthusiasm that followed combinations fell apart, alliances disintegrated, and the nomination was allowed to stand.

On to Washington the scrap-books take us with the Old War Governor as a United States Senator, when “there were no momentous National issues at stake”. The clippings of this period picture the Senator from Iowa as a man who generally wore a “suit of clothes that could be bought new for \$20 and would not fetch at a second hand store more than one-fourth that sum”, but whose “off-hand” speech on the army appropriation bill was “a gem of legal and political oratory”, giving to its author “national prominence”.

Another clipping of the same period pictures the man rather than his clothes: “Perhaps the Governor gained something from his appearance, his manner, the mold in which he was cast. There is a benignity about a strong, rugged, sincere face which carries as forceful an impression as words. It was that quality which lent effectiveness to Webster’s words; it is that colossal truthfulness which glorifies the homely features of Lincoln. Gov. Kirkwood was cast in a large mold. Early toil had developed his muscles, expanded his chest, bronzed and wind-beaten his cheek, brightened his eye, and at the same time had plowed furrows in his brow and hewed out the rough lines of his face. Thus when he spoke to



men — in that slow, deliberate, earnest way of his — what was said took on a certain penetration due as much to the man who said it as to the truth his words carried with them.”

With one-half of their contents relating to Kirkwood's position in the Cabinet the scrap-books tell the story of Iowa's "Genius in Homespun" as Secretary of the Interior during President Garfield's administration. Without dates or headlines and with some confusion as to sequence, the clippings of the time give every phase of his appointment — praise and criticism, political gossip, newspaper "fire works", and "Vox Populi". There are many verbal pictures from original negatives (without the flattering manipulation of the retoucher's pencil) of the "stalwartizing" of President Arthur's administration, of Iowa's "style of Republicanism" and unbounded faith in "old-fashioned honesty", and of the "practical common-sense" of that "grand representative of the great State of Iowa — the Old War Governor".

Here is an early pen portrait by a staff correspondent of the New York *Tribune* entitled "The Secretary and his Office": "Secretary Kirkwood carries his sixty-eight years lightly, and can do more hard, close work in a day than most men of forty. He has a strong, shrewd, kindly face with high cheekbones, deep wrinkles and heavy eyebrows. A remnant of whisker is allowed to escape the barber high up on each cheek. The gray does not yet domi-



nate over the brown in his hair. His clothes look as if a village tailor had constructed them under strict orders to pay no attention to fashion-plates and to make them ample, strong and comfortable. The big slouch hat which he wears on the street must be a veteran of many contests with wind and rain on the Iowa prairies. Its owner never minds the shape it gets into when he swings it upon his head, takes his stout stick and strides out of his office. You would say, seeing him go by: 'What a fine specimen of a substantial, intelligent Western farmer'. This farmer-looking man carries a vigorous, practical brain under his felt hat, and a warm heart under his loose sack coat. He has played a great part in the building up of the magnificent young State of Iowa, was her Governor in the stormy war time, has represented her many years on the floor of the United States Senate, and is now at the head of the most exacting and laborious of all the Government Departments. I predict that he will succeed in his new position as he has in the many others he has held."

In the midst of several hundred clippings the reader comes suddenly upon two "Special Washington Telegrams" which state, among other things, that "Secretary Kirkwood can not fulfill the duties of his office", that "he does not understand how to leave all the details of the work of his Department to subordinates", that "he insists upon reading and

answering all the letters sent to him", and that, being "one of the most honest men in the world", he seemed to think "the interior department would immediately get away with his Iowa reputation for honesty if he did not *attend to every detail*."

Commenting upon these reports the Chicago *Inter Ocean* declares that "The whole thing is a tissue of malicious fiction from beginning to end"; while Iowa papers saw in the concert of these Washington wires "a conspiracy in some quarter to break the brave old man down and drive him out of the cabinet". In the flood of these newspaper comments the Chicago *Journal* observes that "it is now well understood at Washington . . . that before the 4th of March next Secretaries Kirkwood and Hunt will yield their places to approved 'Stalwarts' who are already agreed upon by Grant, Conkling, Cameron, Logan and Co., who are the real bosses of this administration, Arthur merely doing their bidding. It is understood . . . that republican Iowa is to be punished for her refusal to go for a third term for Grant in the Chicago convention, by being left out in the cold. Iowa can stand it if the bosses can." "It is a new table", comments the Des Moines *Register* philosophically, "and the men who sit up to it must be able not only to eat the new kind of meat but say that they like it".

The tumult of special dispatches dies, and staff correspondents seek new fields. The Washington *Post* notes the retirement of Secretary Kirkwood in



these words: "It is a source of satisfaction . . . . to himself and his friends that he remained long enough in the Cabinet to verify the hopes that were entertained of his administration, and to disarm the criticisms with which certain of his views were at the outset assailed. He has proved himself an able, sagacious Secretary, above all suspicion of corruption or favoritism, and, retiring as he does by virtue of an assumed political exigency, bears with him the admiration and esteem of his fellow-citizens of all parties."

And the Dubuque *Times*, voicing the affection of the State of Iowa, declares: "Father Kirkwood is coming home. That means to Iowa, because all Iowa is his home, and all Iowa loves him as it has honored him."

Through her labor of love the "quiet little lady with silvery hair" has made a contribution to the source materials of Iowa history that is of real value; and besides, these eight hundred clippings contain much "local color" for the artist who would use Iowa materials as a basis for literary endeavor. They give us the newspaper English and the everyday speech of the time. They give us sketches that grow in worth as the pioneer becomes more and more of a legendary figure; sketches of the old campaign torch-light procession that "marched round and round the park" and of the three hour "rally" through which the "entire audience remained till



the close"; and sketches, too, of the Civil War veteran campfires and regiment reunions, where old soldiers sang patriotic songs and the bugler sounded again the "mess call" and "taps".

Mrs. Kirkwood's clippings tell us something of the independence of spirit of the Iowa people of fifty years ago; something of their confidence in their ability to do their own thinking; something of their contempt for snobbery and their distrust of the political boss; something of their liking for honest convictions and their scorn of "succotash policies"; something of their sense of the value of money, and their fear of ostentation and extravagance; something of their community pride and Commonwealth allegiance; something of their deep affection and their attachment to precious memories; something of their admiration of practical common sense and the square deal, and of their fine regard for old fashioned goodness shyly covered by brusque speech and manner; something of their homely ways and ideals; and something of their own faith in the worth of the young Commonwealth.

Here in the editorialized news and news laden editorials of the small town "weekly", where dates are often wrong and where many of the "facts" stated are not true, there are reflected with unquestionable accuracy the popular temper and the sentiment of "the times of Kirkwood"—temper and sentiment in which one recognizes the "family disposition" of the Iowa of to-day.

Such is the story of Mrs. Kirkwood's scrap-books — a collection of headless, dateless clippings. It is the story of the "Hero in Homespun" with a roughly sketched background of the young Commonwealth of Iowa. Not only did the "quiet little lady with silvery hair" compile a unique record of the life and times of Samuel J. Kirkwood, but her clippings suggest a wealth of literary possibilities in the materials of Iowa history and give added meaning to the words of Frank Luther Mott: "It requires no very strong faith, and no very robust courage as a prophet, to predict that the day of the Iowa pioneer in literature is only dawning since the Middle West possesses the natural, historical and cultural elements of background which are essential for literature."

BERTHA M. H. SHAMBAUGH

## Comment by the Editor

### IOWA STATESMEN

Men from Massachusetts are now preëminent in the national government. Calvin Coolidge is President, John W. Weeks is Secretary of War, Oliver W. Holmes and Louis D. Brandeis are Associate Justices of the Supreme Court, Frederick H. Gillett is Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Henry Cabot Lodge is the majority party floor leader in the Senate. Such a condition is not accidental: it is the result of personal ability, experience, and the recognition of merit.

The prominence of particular States in national politics was the fear of the Fathers and the realization of their children. It was at once the danger of the Union and the vindication of democracy. The discovery and acceptance of trustworthy leadership is a measure of the capacity of a people for self-government.

No Iowan has ever been President of the United States — though William B. Allison narrowly missed nomination in 1888 when election would have been practically certain; in 1892 James B. Weaver polled the largest number of votes ever won by a third party candidate except Lincoln and Roosevelt; and Jonathan P. Dolliver might have been Vice



President in 1901. Nevertheless Iowa has contributed much to the statesmanship of the nation. It is only necessary to mention the astute Augustus C. Dodge, the brilliant James W. Grimes, the honest man-of-the-people Samuel J. Kirkwood, the judicious Samuel F. Miller, the cautious William B. Allison, and the eloquent Jonathan P. Dolliver in order to indicate the continual prominence of Iowa men in Washington.

And there have been occasions, as in 1902, when Iowa, like Massachusetts, seemed conspicuous for its political talent. During the first year of Roosevelt's administration Allison and Dolliver occupied positions of leadership in the Senate, Leslie M. Shaw was Secretary of the Treasury, James Wilson was Secretary of Agriculture, David B. Henderson was Speaker of the House of Representatives, and William P. Hepburn, as chairman of the House Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, was formulating the most epochal legislation of the first decade in the twentieth century.

Democracy must have leadership. Fortunate is the Commonwealth like Massachusetts, Virginia, or Iowa that honors its own prophets.

J. E. B.



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